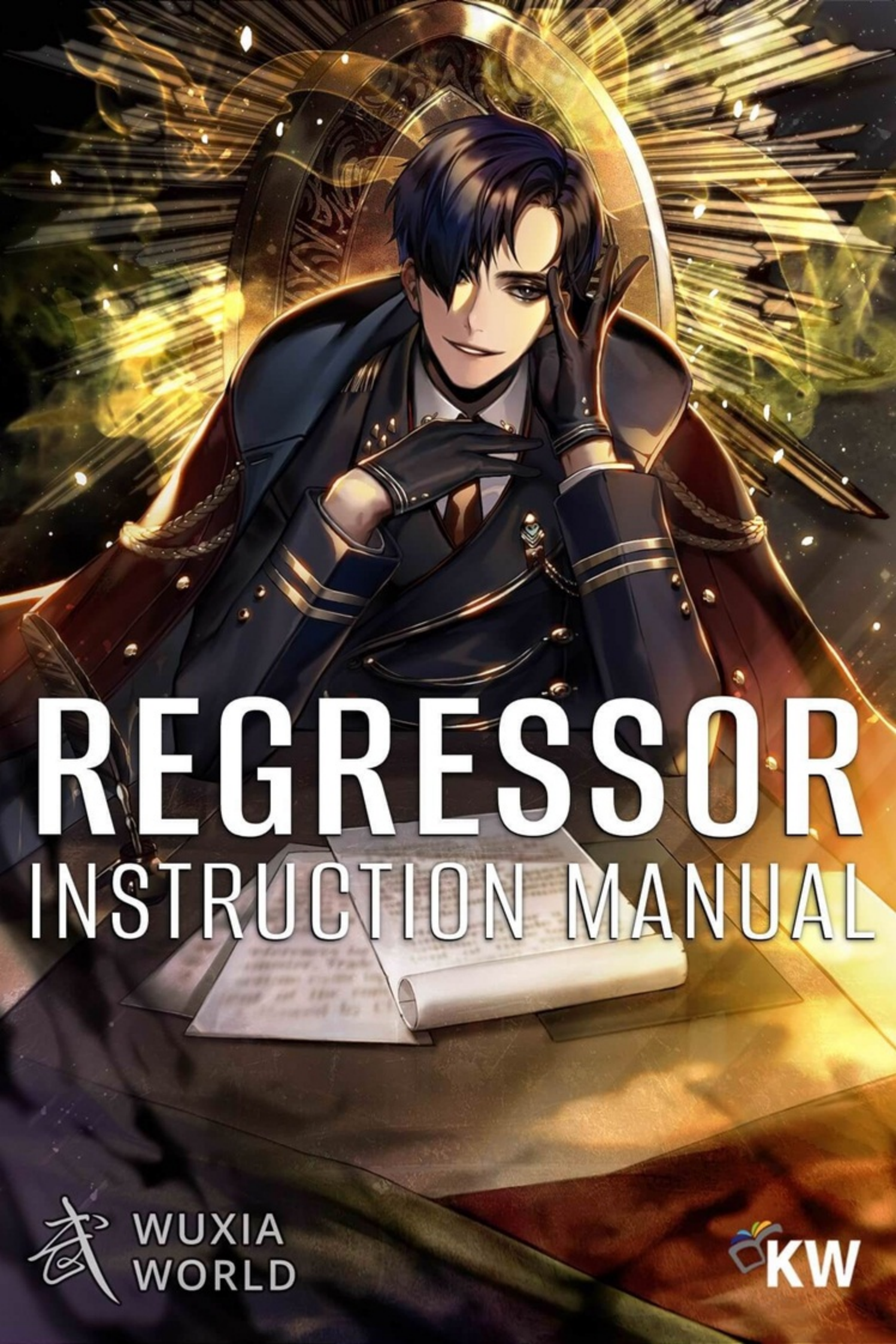
REGRESSOR
INSTRUCTION MANUAL
WUXIA WORLD
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REGRESSOR INSTRUCTION MANUAL

– 회귀자 사용설명서 –

- VOLUME 17 -

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[WUXIAWORLD]

CHAPTER 801
THE LAST (34)

Song Soo-Kyung was covered in cold sweat. I knew he was stressed, but he was more stressed than I thought.

- Who the hell are you?!

The situation appeared so sweet in my eyes when he looked around in a panic. There was no way he'd grab the demon's hand immediately, but it was funny to see him so confused and panicked. He seemed to be thinking that perhaps he was going crazy.

The light's mission to eliminate evil was giving me an endorphin rush.

'You're supposed to enforce justice.'

The light would never be moved by personal emotions.

Everything the light did was done for the continent.

'I am the continent.'

Song Soo-Kyung was breathing heavily while squeezing the armrest of his chair and kneading his temples. He seemed to be questioning whether there was something wrong with him mentally. He was trying to figure out where the voice had come from and why this was happening to him.

He probably believed that he heard that voice because he was too stressed these days.

He was so exhausted, both mentally and physically. Many incidents had been reported recently, so he probably thought that he was starting to hear things out of exhaustion.

I wasn't sure if Song Soo-Kyung knew, but this was how demons got into contact with their contractors.

Jin Cheong probably had a similar experience when he got into a contract with Belial.

The standard procedure was to tear him down mentally before approaching him, but I honestly couldn't bother doing that.

'It'll take too long.'

I wanted him to sign the contract as soon as possible.

After washing his face with cold water, Song Soo-Kyung looked at himself in the mirror, and he flinched upon seeing a strange reflection in the mirror.

- What… was that?

He looked in the mirror once again in disbelief and doubt. He wasn't stupid, so he had definitely realized what was going on. I had given him plenty of hints as well.

- This… can't be happening.

'Of course, it's happening. That's just how it is. It'll be hard at first, but you'll get used to it.'

- No way…

The door opened just then, and a few people entered the room.

Song Soo-Kyung flinched and immediately raised his guard.

- Mr. Song Soo-Kyung.

- W-Wait…

- You don't look so good… Should I call for a priest?

- No, I'm fine. I just…

- I knew you would be training, but… I think it's best if you don't overdo it today… How about you take a break today?

- I would like to be alone.

- What?

- Everyone, please leave.

The way he was breathing heavily made it obvious that there was something wrong with him, but the people nodded and left.

I was sure they got goosebumps seeing him panting in such a dark room. I was worried Villain Song was going to visit another statue to seek answers, but as expected, he decided to remain quiet.

“It’s pretty obvious,” I said.

He wouldn’t go to another god and ask them to solve this problem.

Not only was it hard to confess that a demon was inside him, but there was also no guarantee that the demon could be driven out after his confession.

I’d be happy if he refused to rely on his own strength, but he seemed to be thinking that he could handle this by himself because he was the follower of the sunset.

Song Soo-Kyung dragged his trembling legs away.

Someone was called for him, but he didn’t respond.

Song Soo-Kyung entered his room and immediately locked the door behind him.

He knocked on the large bookshelf, and the bookshelf parted to reveal a staircase.

He walked down the staircase for a while until he eventually found a stone door that led to a room made out of stones. A few candles lit the room, and there were many different items inside the room.

‘This psychotic bastard. I knew this was going to happen.’

- O God. O Savior.

I saw a large statue, and he had to have sculpted it himself because it looked awkward.

Actually, at a glance, it looked okay, but…

'It's definitely different… compared to Han Sora's work.'

There was definitely a difference between the work of an ordinary person and the work of an artisan.

Overall, the statue looked like Kim Hyun-Sung, but calling that *thing* Kim Hyun-Sung was an insult to our regressor. The statue's body looked pretty decent, but its face looked nothing like our regressor.

Moreover, a temple statue was supposed to contain some holy power, but I couldn't feel even an ounce of holy power in that statue.

'He didn't put his soul into it. He didn't put in enough effort.'

Aside from the statue, there were several items that caught my attention. A rosario that seemed to embody the God of Sunset and a bible that had his story written in it. There were also unidentifiable objects that were laid out as if they were treasures.

However, it was so dark that I couldn't identify them.

I was sure he wanted to ask a skilled sculptor to make a statue for him, but who could he ask? Our lovely regressor had gained wings and light, but the holy power he was getting had yet to be sorted out.

The God of Sunset was still a human of this world, and he didn't idolize himself like Jung Ha-Yan did. It was more like faith. The holy power most of the denizens were sending to him was far from the so-called "complete" faith, and that was what it meant about Kim Hyun-Sung not being qualified just yet.

It was highly likely that Song Soo-Kyung would look like a madman in everyone else's eyes. Of course, some would think that what he was doing was strange. He could attempt to establish the sunset religion since that was how legends and religion were born, but he had no place in the upper echelons of the sunset religion.

'That's my spot, damn it.'

As I said before, I was the creator of the God of Sunset, and I had completed him myself. The one who would create the Order of the Sunset would also be…

“Me. I'm the one who's going to create it, you bastard,” I said.

'I’m going to do it from scratch with my own two hands. Ji-Hye noona, I really must be a control freak.'

- O Savior, I haven’t lost faith in you, and I haven’t fallen for the temptation of the evil ones.

-…

- Please realize that my faith in you hasn’t changed. My faith will never change. No matter how many times those dirty beings whisper lies into my ears, I refuse to hear their voices.

‘You think it’ll be that easy?’

- Please give me… give me strength like you've always done. Give me the strength to overcome the lies.

‘Strength, my ass.’

Obviously, I found it amusing that he was mumbling to a statue that had no power.

To be honest, he looked like an idiot.

After a while, he stopped praying and stood up, looking a bit relieved. He probably believed that his prayer was effective. However, what he had done was nothing but comforting himself.

The demon that had entered him using his weakness was stuck somewhere deep inside his heart and was constantly prodding at his weakness.

“Hye-Jin, are you ready?” I asked.

- I’m ready, but… You’re already watching. I’m in front of the Continental Protection Management Committee headquarters. I received permission to come for training and brought Ye-Ri, but…

“Just tell her to play along. I want to see how far this goes,” I instructed her.

- Ye-Ri doesn’t seem to be in a good mood.

“That’s exactly the kind of situation I want,” I said.

- I have no idea what you’re thinking, but… *Ah*, I think Miss Ha-Yan found a lead.

“Really?” I asked.

- She’s not certain yet, but I received news that she’s certain she’s able to trace back the portal. She could’ve done it faster if it weren't for the strange missionary work, but…

“Tell her to continue her work,” I ordered.

- If Miss Ha-Yan gets a lead, can we meet Miss Ji-Hye?

“Yes. That's the plan. To be honest, even if it weren't for the strange missionary work, it would’ve taken her time to get a lead. I think Lee Ji-Hye has been dropping clues here and there. The things found at the place where the anomaly had occurred managed to play an important role, right?” I asked.

- I was told that it could’ve taken longer if it hadn't been for those things.

‘She should’ve just given us everything if she was going to leave hints like that.’

- It’d be a relief… if Miss Ji-Hye’s remaining consciousness is what’s guiding us, but…

“I’m sure Miss Ji-Hye is doing fine, so head inside for now. You already talked to Ye-Ri, right?” I asked.

I glanced to the side and saw Kim Ye-Ri. She looked like she was in a bad mood. She was obviously dragged here and there, so it wasn't strange that she looked unhappy.

‘Yeah, I’m sure she’s annoyed.’

Kim Ye-Ri was our little child who had basically grown up in the Blue Guild.

She often acted like she didn't like me at all, but I knew that she liked me. I had basically raised her when our regressor had run away from home.

It was a bit exaggerated, but it was true. Nowadays, she was often out with Park Deok-Gu and Ahn Ki-Mo. However, It wasn't like that at first. Basically, I was like her mother, and I took great care of her.

Kim Ye-Ri was one of the saddest people upon learning of my death, so I understood why she was really annoyed. A villain had suddenly appeared and was trying to take my spot. Based on her personality, she would have sliced him up with her dagger if that were possible.

She was once close to Jo Hye-Jin, but their relationship had become quite awkward.

Kim Ye-Ri had said that she didn't want to go, but she still ended up getting dragged here, so it wasn't strange that she was dissatisfied.

- I told you "no." Unni.

- It’s Mr. Lee Ki-Young’s wish, Ye-Ri. Don’t say anything right now and…

- I don’t like it. Who the hell does he think he is? That New Continental Protection Management Committee or whatever is annoying.

'You should say that out loud and not behind their backs.'

- That man. I don’t like the fact that I have to help him with the training.

-…

- Mister. Is the only person who can do it. It’s like he’s imitating him. It’s annoying.

It wasn’t the best example, but Kim Ye-Ri was acting as if a stepmother or a stepfather had appeared to replace her deceased parent. She was spinning around while holding her dagger as if proving that my assumption was right.

To make things worse, she didn’t even look at Song Soo-Kyung, who was greeting Jo Hye-Jin.

She was expressing her frustration, but Villain Song had no choice but to leave her be.

Kim Hyun-Sung and Kim Ye-Ri had different classes, but it was an undeniable fact

that she had trained under Kim Hyun-Sung. If the guild was asked to choose someone who had the most similar movement technique to Kim Hyun-Sung, the guild would definitely pick her.

Anyway, this was just training, but Kim Ye-Ri wasn't going to go easy on him.

'Our child is pretty strong.'

After a simple mock battle with Villain Song, Kim Ye-Ri took out the receiver in her ear.

"*Ptooey!*"

'Spitting… is a bit overboard, don't you think?'

'It makes you look really rude.'

"Trash. Trash. Trash." Kim Ye-Ri mumbled.

To make things worse, Kim Ye-Ri even stomped on the receiver. Anyone could tell her behavior was driven by her emotions. I knew she wasn't going to go easy, but she was being more hostile than I thought.

"Trash! Trash! Trash!" Kim Ye-Ri shouted.

'What are we going to do with you? You're being immature here.'

"The worst! The worst! Trash! Trash! Traaaash!!!" Kim Ye-Ri roared.

It was like she was finally going through the stormy period of adolescence.

CHAPTER 802
THE LAST (35)

I saw joy in Kim Ye-Ri's eyes, and I thought perhaps she was turning into Doom Ye-Ri. I couldn't quite describe the pleasure she seemed to be feeling. She seemed like she was putting on an act while biting her lips, but her smiling face told me that she was enjoying the current situation.

- Trash! Traaaaash!

Slash! Slash!

'She might actually turn into Doom Ye-Ri at this rate. Do something guys. Who does she take after?'

Kim Ye-Ri definitely found the ongoing situation *really* annoying. She was annoyed by the fact that she was forced to help someone she wasn't supposed to help, the dispute over the ownership of my body, the strange phenomena happening on the continent, Jo Hye-Jin's strange behavior, and Kim Hyun-Sung's unknown adventure.

I was sure all of these had been bothering her. I was certain that the guild members thought the same, but she especially enjoyed doing things with the guild, so I was sure she didn't like the fact that the guild had changed.

'Not only that… '

She definitely also felt that the thing that was once hers had been taken away from her.

She had lived a pretty rough life in the slums, so I was sure she wasn't the type to let other people take away the things that were supposed to be hers.

'It's really infuriating when someone gives something and then takes it away.'

Basically, it wasn't strange at all that Kim Ye-Ri was going on a rampage like that. Regardless of the reason, she needed someone to take her anger out on, and Villain

Song had appeared right on time.

Obviously, her actions were rude.

Jo Hye-Jin seemed more anxious than her as she watched the latter vent out her anger on Villain Song.

The revamped Continental Protection Management Committee was cautious around Kim Hyun-Sung, and I was sure Song Soo-Kyung didn’t want to ruin his relationship with the key member of the group that was at the center of the continent.

- Let me apologize on her behalf. She didn’t mean anything by it.

Villain Song definitely did not feel relieved by Jo Hye-Jin's words because there was a frown on his face. However, he couldn’t blame anyone because it was an undeniable fact that he looked like a piece of trash. Actually, I was convinced that he felt relieved upon hearing Kim Ye-Ri's words.

It was just a mock battle, but Kim Ye-Ri and Villain Song had achieved their mission and had succeeded in completing their quest. It was a meaningful moment for Villain Song, but the problem was that his rank was C.

I wasn't trying to brag, but if I did a mock battle with Kim Ye-Ri, I would easily get an SSS rank. Kim Ye-Ri have had a mock battle with Park Deok-Gu and Ahn Ki-Mo, so I was sure she was aware of that.

- *Haa… haa… haa…*

Kim Ye-Ri was catching her breath. She picked up her dagger and left the quest area while shaking her head. She wasn't really the type to wear her heart on her sleeves, so she quickly composed herself and returned to her spot with an indifferent face.

She was definitely cheering inside, but she looked like nothing had happened.

Villain Song was at a loss for words, while Jo Hye-Jin was making excuses for Kim Ye-Ri as the latter returned to her spot proudly.

The mock battle was over, and it was time to give feedback.

However, the atmosphere was so awkward that it wasn’t easy to do that.

Song Soo-Kyung came back to his senses because he knew that he couldn't feel embarrassed. He smiled once more. Perhaps he thought he needed to be generous, as he was older than Kim Ye-Ri, but regardless of the reason, he quickly became calm.

- Ye-Ri.

-…

- Just now…

Jo Hye-Jin was still talking. I was sure she called Kim Ye-Ri to ask her to apologize for her rude behavior.

- *Ah!*

- It’s fine, Miss Jo Hye-Jin. There’s no need to apologize.

- So you heard.

- Excuse me?

- I thought. The call. Ended. The moment the mission. Ended. I’m sorry. I did it. Unknowingly.

-…

- Kim Ye-Ri.

- I really. Didn’t think you’d listen. If I had known you were watching. I wouldn’t have acted that way.

She smiled as if she was trying to provoke Villain Song.

I did that smile often so I knew, but anyone could tell that she was trying to provoke Villain Song. Kim Ye-Ri was openly saying she didn’t like him and that she wanted him to get angry.

To be honest, I didn’t expect her to be *this* bad.

‘She's a monster that the Blue Guild has created. Damn it.’

- *Haha…* It’s okay. I know my performance was pretty bad…

- It wasn’t just bad.

-…

- Unni. It’s way. Better. If I talk honestly to him. This kind of training is useless for him. Also, this isn’t being rude or immature. It’s training. He needs honest feedback. I remember how I beat up Park Deok-Gu when I trained him a long time ago.

- She’s right. Being honest will help me a lot more. I didn’t ask for important guests to come here just to hear sugar-coated words.

- First.

-…

- Your field of view is too narrow. I have an idea as to why you want to improve, but you lack the talent and skills. You’re too slow to process information, so you’re always one step, half step, two steps, and even three steps late.

- You really lack the ability to see the big picture. What were you doing during the Continental War, the Republic War, and the War against the 27th Legion?

-…

- Mister Ki-Young commanded both big fights and small skirmishes. The experience he had obtained by fighting on the battlefield and vomiting blood isn’t something you can obtain in a short period of time.

- It's not just a matter of data and tactics. If you don’t have the experience to help you make decisive decisions, you won’t be able to control the battlefield that changes in real time. That is not something you can obtain from small clans or guilds.

‘She’s starting to talk informally.’

I could tell that she didn’t want to show respect toward Villain Song.

-…

- Normally, a genius will obtain experience by fighting head-on. If an ordinary person without any experience can succeed in something like that with the help of artifacts or any other external tools, then everyone on the continent will be able to do similar things as Mister Ki-Young.

- Understanding the battlefield isn't the only thing you lack, Mr. Song Soo-Kyung. You obviously don't have enough experience on the battlefield. I feel kind of bad to say that it's your fault, but this isn't something you can overcome in a short period of time.

- I see…

- Those are the major problems that I noticed from our mock battle just now. As I mentioned earlier, your field of view is too narrow for me to explain in detail. It's more like you were watching the battlefield from above. It's more like you're trying to predict the future and are watching the large battlefield as a whole.

After Kim Ye-Ri opened the map, she took out her dagger and started drawing lines.

- The entire northern region.

After getting chided by Elena, I thought Elias was the most pitiful after getting chided by Elena.

'I'm sure he hates being here right now… '

- Your field of view covers only a major city, while Hyun-Sung oppa's range is bigger than the northern region. That is not worth the effort at all. It doesn't make sense to attempt what you're trying to do for a major city.

- How are you going to put the ocean into a cup? My honest opinion is that what you're trying to do is not going to make you even stronger. *Ah*, there's one more thing about your field of view being narrow.

- You have no knowledge about the intricate details of other jobs, and I'm sure you also don't know much about the named soldiers of the enemies. I have no idea how Mister Ki-Young had all that knowledge, but he knew the movements, skills, behavior, and habits of all the named soldiers Hyun-Sung oppa had faced so far.

-…

- There weren’t any errors. It was as if he knew everything about them. Despite the fact that he's not a swordsman, and his job isn't a close combat job, he still managed to figure out all of that, which goes beyond just having talent.

- It means he has a good eye, which also requires talent. I’m not in the position to criticize you for putting in the effort to reduce the gap between you and him, but you'll never catch up to him.

‘Thanks, Mind’s Eye.’

-…

- To make things worse, you don’t really know much about me despite being part of the revamped Continental Protection Management Committee. There’s a reason why I revealed part of my stats and abilities. I really didn’t want to tell you, but I did this because you wanted to give this a try. The result was…

- I see…

- You don’t know what I’m capable of doing, Mr. Song Soo-Kyung. You also don’t understand what it means when an adventurer fights with everything he has at his peak.

- I trusted you with the risk of my head or arm being cut off and becoming a cripple. That was just a mock battle, but I basically put my life in your hands. To be exact, you almost died three times, and if this were a real battle, you'd have become a cripple.

- You don’t even understand me, who is basically a downgraded version of Hyun-Sung oppa, so you obviously do not understand Hyun-Sung oppa himself.

- That’s…

Song Soo-Kyung’s expression changed.

- Am I. Wrong?

It had been a while since Kim Ye-Ri talked that much without any weird pauses. To make matters worse, she was looking at Villain Song as if she was certain that she

was right.

Villain Song nodded for now, but there was no way he would accept her words.

He couldn't say anything right now, but hearing her say that he did not understand Kim Hyun-Sung really pissed him off.

It was like telling Father Basel that he couldn't fully understand Goddess Benigoa.

If someone were to say that, I could guarantee that they'd be hanging in the capital square the next morning.

Our quick-witted child had to have realized Song Soo-Kyung's triggers, and she became determined to provoke him even more. She'd always end her sentences with…

- There's no way you understand. You *can't* understand him.

Song Soo-Kyung had come here with the intention of learning and becoming even stronger, but it didn't take long for his smile to disappear.

On the outside, he looked like he was accepting her feedback, but it was obvious what he was actually thinking. Kim Ye-Ri kept talking regardless of whether he was listening to her or not.

- It'll be effective in small battles. It might work when going up against normal parties or clans, but… Yeah. It *might* work, but it's going to be the bare minimum. This is impossible to achieve unless you've reincarnated with all of your memories or something. This is just statistics. The facts I'm about to tell you now are based on the statistics compiled by the Blue Guild.

- This is top secret information, but feedback is required during training, and you're a key figure of the revamped Continental Protection Management Committee, so I'll tell you.

Jo Hye-Jin looked anxious. I was sure she was curious as to what Kim Ye-Ri was about to tell him. She signaled to Kim Ye-Ri, but Kim Ye-Ri spoke as if it didn't matter, so Jo Hye-Jin didn't bother stopping her.

Kim Ye-Ri had an idea as to how the guild worked, so she knew the things she was

allowed to say and things she wasn't allowed to say.

- How many people do you think have received tasks from Mister Lee Ki-Young while he was maintaining his connection with Hyun-Sung oppa? How many people do you think he gave missions… throughout the entire northern region?

-…

- Exactly 5,421 people. 712 priests and 831 mages. He even gave missions to Park Yeon-Joo unni of the Black Swan Guild, the Eight Seats, and the named adventurers of the continent.

'It was that many?'

I couldn't really remember it, but it probably wasn't that many.

I was sure Kim Ye-Ri was overexaggerating.

- He did all of that while maintaining his connection with Hyun-Sung oppa. He did all of that to make sure that Hyun-Sung oppa could focus on the battle. What do you think made it possible for him to do that?

-…

- I've been talking about talent all this time, but… I honestly don't think it's because he's a genius. Lee Ki-Young, no…

-…

- Ki-Young oppa…

'I'm an oppa now, too.'

- He was chosen by god. That's why it was possible.

She was supposed to give feedback during feedback time, but it became bragging time about Lee Ki-Young. Song Soo-Kyung bit his lips unknowingly and grabbed the table, seemingly trying to suppress his anger.

Kim Ye-Ri said I was chosen by Benigoa, but he definitely thought that she was

saying that Kim Hyun-Sung had chosen him. I could feel him calming down. I wasn't connected to him, but I could feel his emotions hit rock bottom.

I thought it was too soon, but I had to say something to him.

-…

"…"

-…

"You want the same thing as that man named Lee Ki-Young."

CHAPTER 803
THE LAST (36)

"You want the same thing as that man named Lee Ki-Young."

- Thank you for the feedback, Miss Kim Ye-Ri. I'll make sure to keep that in mind during the next training session.

- What I just said. I don't think. You fully understood. Mr. Song Soo-Kyung. I…

- I'm sorry, but I need time to organize the feedback you provided. I would also like to thank Miss Jo Hye-Jin. I prepared food and a banquet for both of you, so please enjoy yourselves. If you don't have any other plans, feel free to stay here and let me know anytime you need something…

- Let's go home. I feel uncomfortable. Unni.

- I appreciate the offer, but we'll be heading back. We have a lot of work we need to handle.

- That's unfortunate. My assistants will guide you outside. Thank you again… I'll see you in two days.

-…

- I'm not sure how much you'll change in two days. Right? Unni?

- Ye-Ri.

- What? I'm not wrong.

'Kim Ye-Ri is pretty cold.'

Kim Ye-Ri seemed like she had yet to have her fill as she started whispering to Jo Hye-Jin, which honestly scared me. She was whispering in a way that would allow Song Soo-Kyung to both hear and not hear her at the same time.

Kim Ye-Ri's provocation was enough to anger even a clergy of the Order of Benigoa.

However, it seemed that Villain Song wasn't listening to her.

When I first talked to him, he seemed rattled about it. Today, however, his reaction was different. He seemed worried that he wouldn't hear my voice anymore, and he seemed bothered about the fact that I had realized how he wanted to be like me.

He said a few words to Jo Hye-Jin and Kim Ye-Ri that sounded like an expulsion order, and then he told his assistants to take care of the rest, which made me realize his current condition.

Of course, he did not want to do what he did, but he didn't have the luxury to take care of them. Regardless, he treated them quite poorly.

'Now that you had a taste of power, is that all you want? Or are you feeling out of it?'

He could be feeling both.

Anyway, the important part was that our Ye-Ri had won this round.

'Ye-Ri, you carried.'

- He puts me in a bad mood. It's annoying. Trash.

- You did well today, Ye-Ri.

-…

- Are you okay, unni?

- Of course not.

Kim Ye-Ri looked so irresistibly lovely when she expressed that being with Villain Song was enough to put her in a bad mood.

'You saved the continent.'

Of course, Kim Ye-Ri *did* hurt his pride through her harsh comments, but I wasn't happy because of Kim Ye-Ri's comments. Of course, I knew her comment wasn't

enough to make him accept my offer.

I was sure the key comments she had made during her speech really struck it home for him. He had realized his incompetence and was also in despair about the possibility that he wasn't the God of Sunset's Chosen One.

The desire to stand beside him and follow him was starting to crumble.

He was nervous about the possibility that he might never be able to catch up to me. The thought that he'd never get chosen broke his cornered heart.

If I were to make a reasonable offer, I was sure he'd sign the contract without any issues. Why? It was all because he didn't have the luxury of time. He knew a large time bomb was about to explode.

As expected, he immediately walked out of the room after sending Jo Hye-Jin and Kim Ye-Ri away. I was worried he was going to go to the secret shrine in his room, but he seemed to have realized that it wasn't a suitable place to talk to this *being* he had been assuming was a demon.

- Who are you? Who… Why do you keep…

"You probably know best, you immature mortal," I answered.

- Who are you?

"A being who can give you what you want," I replied.

- How can you… talk to me?

"Your desperation has reached me. Your earnest desire for god has reached me," I answered.

- You're a demon. You're a dirty demon, you bastard.

"Why are you calling me a demon, mortal?" I questioned.

-…

"You've proven how narrow-minded you are by claiming that I'm a demon if I'm not a

god. If you call me a demon, then I'm a demon; if you call me a god, then I must be a god. If you want to say that I'm neither, then that's fine as well.

"If you think I'm an unknown transcendent being, then I'm an unknown transcendent being; if you think I'm your assistant, then I'm your assistant.

"My identity is your decision to make so long as it's going to be beneficial to you. There's nothing more stupid than demanding an answer from me. What do you want to hear from me? What kind of answer do you want?" I asked.

- What kind of bullshit…

"The will to manage this world, this continent is far more complex and diverse than you think. It's not something that can be processed from a human's perspective. I'm not asking you to understand me, but you need to widen your view a bit," I told him.

- Are you saying… you're not a demon?

"I'm the continent itself and the will imbued within the continent. You cannot identify me as simply a god or a demon. I won't tell you to serve me or worship me. I won't tell you to sell your soul to me either. You're…" I paused.

- A follower of the sunset.

"I won't tell you to abandon your faith in the God of Sunset either," I continued.

Song Soo-Kyung seemed like he was willing to talk for a bit. He was still wary of me, but my last comment had to have convinced him.

He realized that I wasn't trying to test his faith. I couldn't tell what he was thinking, but I could tell he was willing to talk to me. He was still biting his lips and was wondering whether he should believe me or not.

- How can I trust you?

"I never asked you to believe in my existence. It's up to you whether you want to take my hand or not and if you reject it, I'll just offer my assistance to someone else," I answered.

- What do you mean?

“I didn’t come to answer your questions,” I told him.

- What did you mean when you said I wanted the same thing as Lee Ki-Young?

“It’ll be easier to understand if I told you he received my help as well,” I replied.

- What?

“I said he received my help as well, mortal,” I repeated.

- Is that right…

Song Soo-Kyung nodded lightly, and he bit his nails nervously as if he had decided to accept the situation.

I wouldn’t have been able to make those achievements if it hadn't been for the Telescope and Mind’s Eye, but Song Soo-Kyung didn't know that, so he assumed that I had either signed a contract with a demon or had received help from a transcendent being.

He probably discovered quite a few strange things. Actually, he probably stopped making any more assumptions about me because this bastard had never really acknowledged my existence from the very beginning.

It didn’t make sense to talk about the legend of the sunset without talking about the Son of Light. Despite that, he was intentionally ignoring my achievements as the Son of Light so I was sure my assumption was right.

“He tried to stand next to the God of Sunset,” I said.

-…

“He wanted to follow in his footsteps and walk with him. It was a twisted and disgusting desire, but it was also the innocent yearning and dream of a child.

"The Son of Light's will—his will had awakened me. I woke up again thanks to his desire and dream. In the end, the Son of Light got what he wanted. Not only did he stand next to him as his equal, but he was also…” I trailed off.

-…

“Chosen by the God of Sunset,” I continued.

Song Soo-Kyung gulped.

“That was an expression of faith and respect. He was a mere human, but he was honest… about wanting to stand next to a god,” I added.

- Lee Ki-Young, what did he… What did he receive?

“What he needed and what he wanted. You can also get the same thing, but of course, that’s only if you want it…” I answered.

It was really amusing to see him think so seriously about my offer. He looked like he was thinking about whether to believe the voice only he could hear or not. He was probably trying to rationalize everything. After all, the bait was too good to pass up.

‘You can stand next to god, and you can be chosen by him.’

It was a temptation not even clergy of the Order of Benigoa could refuse so easily.

I could guarantee that a bunch of priests would show up to give up their souls just to stand next to Benigoa if she were to make that kind of offer.

That was what it meant to be a martyr, after all. It was also a sacrifice for their goddess.

The holy knights who always fought with their lives on the front lines and the heretic inquisitors who spared not even themselves believed that they would be able to rest next to Benigoa upon death.

Some religious beliefs were borderline mad and could cloud people’s judgment.

The desire to be close to god was *that* scary.

‘This bastard is no exception.’

As Song Soo-Kyung hit rock bottom, a tiny gleam glimmered. However, I didn't really care whether that light was dangerous or not.

He was still making excuses for himself, saying that he wasn't talking to a demon and

that accepting my offer couldn't be considered betraying the God of Sunset. He also believed that all of this was for god and for *himself*.

He was telling himself that he had to do this to complete Kim Hyun-Sung.

- What will happen… if I don't accept your offer?

"That's a stupid question. Nothing will happen to you," I replied.

- In that case…

"You're not the only one who wants to walk with god," I added.

'Even if you don't accept, someone else will.'

-…

'There will be other people who will walk with the God of Sunset.'

- I…

'I don't have to feel anxious. You're the one who should be feeling anxious.'

- I…

'Are you going to let this chance get away again? You want it, right? Shit, I know you do.'

"Take my hand, mortal," I said.

-…

"Everything you wish will come true," I added.

- O God. O God…

Song Soo-Kyung started praying. I wasn't sure why he was crying, but I could tell that he was in the middle of a huge internal conflict.

- O God…

“…”

The room was dark, but I could see his face. When I saw his expression, I decided not to speak anymore. The "demon" hidden inside of him had extended his hand toward him.

Song Soo-Kyung grabbed the demon's hand with a distorted smile.

“You’ll get what you want,” I said.

-…

“The eyes and heart of the Son of Light,” I added.

-…

“What you need is the eyes and heart of the Son of Light,” I said.

I started laughing.

‘It’s a killer scene.’

It was a classic cliche, but the royal road would never fail.

CHAPTER 804
THE LAST (37)

Song Soo-Kyung couldn't focus on his tasks, and it was obviously because of the conversation we had a few days ago. He was still taking care of the issues happening all over the continent, as it was his duty to do so.

However, anyone could tell he was out of it.

He was probably thinking whether the contract was going to be effective or not.

Once his assistants were done reporting to him, Villain Song walked away in a hurry.

He sat down and grabbed the helmet-looking artifact.

- What's the situation like?

- There's an ongoing battle. We've confirmed that the enemies are undead of Epic rank or higher. Their controller is…

- Yes?

- It's Mr. Elias of the Everia Kingdom.

- That's…

- Based on the situation, someone could be brainwashing him… We've formed the front lines, but it's collapsing because of the corrupted Elias. We've been accumulating nothing but damage. Reinforcements should arrive soon but at this rate…

'I was wondering what Elias has been up to, so it's a good thing that he finally appeared.'

- That's enough with the report. From now on, I'll command the battlefield. Please confirm the list of named soldiers who are currently fighting on the front lines.

- One of the new generals of the Republic…

- Connect me with them.

- Yes, sir.

It wasn't a big battle, but it was a battle over a strategic location, so it was natural for him to start commanding the troops. I wasn't sure whether it was because he showed a pretty cool side of him a few days ago, but those around him looked at him in awe.

Song Soo-Kyung put down the ugly helmet, and it was probably because he thought he no longer needed it.

He sat down and stared at the screen.

A fierce battle had already broken out on the battlefield.

A cacophony of noises and screams could be heard everywhere.

Elias stood amidst his undead army and was swinging his sword on the battlefield. The sight was enough for everyone to know that they were the threat to the continent.

Song Soo-Kyung had already made his debut, but he seemed kind of nervous now that he had to prove himself once more. I was sure he wanted to do a lot better than the first time.

- I'll start commanding the troops, Natrian.

- What? You're…

- I'm Song Soo-Kyung of the revamped Continental Protection Management Committee. Please obey my orders.

I was the one who was busy even though I wasn't the one he had signed a contract with.

'Looks like I'll be getting carried in a cheap car.'

I was involved in the contract process, so I couldn’t sit idly by and just watch. It was part of my job to deliver the will to the demon he had gotten into a contract with.

Basically, the contract was carried out with an outsourcing company.

Of course, there weren't any issues with the contract or its functions. This was the second contract I had gotten involved in, and the first one was done with a rookie whose name I had never even heard before.

‘I’m not the type to do this for anyone. I’ve become too soft.’

I was a graceful man with pride.

‘But Natrian should be fine.’

Natrian was too incompetent to be compared to Kim Hyun-Sung, Thronus, Rafael, and even Jo Hye-Jin, but there was a reason he became famous as the rising star of the Republic.

He was still young and had room to grow.

If someone were to force me to compliment him, I would say that he had a good rhythm.

Natrian wasn’t fast nor was he strong, but I could tell that he was following a certain rhythm with his rapier.

It wasn’t too consistent, but he was pretty good at changing it up whenever the enemy had adapted to his attack patterns or was about to get bored of it.

If I wasn’t so spoiled from seeing high-quality fights, I would have been satisfied with his fighting technique, even though it was kind of boring.

The Telescope allowed me to witness the entire battlefield.

When the rising star of the Republic finally needed to carry out his mission, Song Soo-Kyung started talking. He was probably mistaken in thinking that he was the one who had thought of the mission when I was the one who came up with it.

- Turn left. Check coordinates, and then move immediately. I’ll take care of the rear.

No matter what happens, follow my orders.

- O-Okay.

'He's too slow.'

It was fun, but it was getting boring because his base stats were too low.

Light flowed out of Natrian as he performed multiple thrusts toward the Epic-rank undead before him with his rapier. It didn't take long for his face to be filled with joy.

Natrian had to be thinking that he had become one with the battlefield.

It was understandable, as he had never experienced this until now.

- Elias is in the front. Don't face him just yet. Go around.

- Okay!

It looked like the arrows and spells that were falling on both enemy and allied forces were avoiding Natrian. He probably felt like the protagonist of a movie right now. I would have felt the same thing if he were Kim Hyun-Sung, but unfortunately, I couldn't feel Natrian's feelings, which was probably why I was getting bored.

I liked Natrian, so I decided to provide him with a variety of support. However, he decided to only use twenty percent of his overall prowess, so there wasn't much I could do. Fortunately, it should be enough to turn the tables.

Elias—no, Ji-Hye noona definitely thought that this was the limit of her troops, as she made them retreat. She definitely knew of the oncoming reinforcements and didn't want to risk getting caught.

- This is… *ha… haha…* What the hell…

Natrian was breathing rapidly, looking excited and thrilled as he held up his rapier.

Song Soo-Kyun was sweating, and his face had darkened.

'Looks like our Mr. Song Soo-Kyung isn't satisfied.'

- Good job.

- I-It was nothing. Thank you for your hard work… Mr. Song Soo-Kyung. Thank you so much. *Ha… haha…* You're amazing.

- I should be saying that to you.

The air in the situation room where they were watching the battlefield through the Goddess' Mirror and the air around Song Soo-Kyung were completely opposite.

Song Soo-Kyung was clearly dissatisfied with the battle just now.

He *did* change a lot, but he wanted something much more than that.

- It's like the Son of Light has come back to life.

- *Haha…* Looks like god has yet to abandon the continent. He's the blessing of the continent.

- It was amazing.

- You'll be able to fight alongside the Sunset Swordsman.

I couldn't help but smirk when Song Soo-Kyung tightened his fist, but I had to hold it in.

- Thank you for your hard work today.

- It was for the continent. More importantly, Mr. Elias' whereabouts… Actually, I think it's best if we notify Miss Elena first. We'll form a group made up of elf rangers. Although we can't see it now, I feel like the enemy's true nature will soon be revealed. Please keep an eye out and dispatch the group as soon as it's been made.

- Understood.

- Is there anything else that's out of the ordinary?

- The group of survivors we found in the battle with the Federation seems to have gained consciousness. We tried investigating using a variety of methods, but the only thing they said was that they saw masked beings… They still need to rest so the

investigation will take longer.

- When you get new information, please report it right away. I'll be heading out now…

- What about your next schedule?

- Please cancel it. I need… to rest a bit.

- Yes, sir. Have a good rest.

'The revamped Continental Protection Management Committee looks happy.'

Unlike Song Soo-Kyung, the other Committee members were definitely thinking that the ace card they had just employed was successful. I could see it on everyone's happy faces.

Song Soo-Kyung opened his Goddess' Mirror immediately upon entering his room. He probably wanted to see the media praising him and talking about him. He seemed kind of satisfied when he heard everyone call him the "Son of Light's Manifestation" and "Tactical Genius," but he was still nervous.

I was sure he felt even more nervous at the thought that Kim Hyun-Sung had probably heard the news by now.

Song Soo-Kyung's smile suddenly disappeared. Something had to have popped up in his head, and I could already deduce his thoughts. Things had changed after he had accepted the offer. He had grown and had managed to overcome the wall, but…

'It's not enough. It's still not enough.'

I was sure he was thinking along the lines of that.

Song Soo-Kyung's horizons had widened a bit, which allowed him to realize the gap between him and me.

It seemed that the random missions I had thrown out were effective. Man's greed truly knew no bounds. He wouldn't have grabbed my hand in the first place if he could be satisfied with *this*.

He was pretending to pull out his hair while seemingly in agony, but I had an idea as to what he was thinking.

As expected, he mumbled…

- The eye of the Son of Light…

I was sure he was waiting for me to speak.

"It was originally mine. That's right. I gave it to *him*," I said.

-…

"It's an eye that shows things mere mortals cannot see, and it's also a medium that connects you to the God of Sunset. It was what he really wanted, and it was his everything. They say his body has already lost the light, but the authority of his eye and heart has remained. It's not something that can be erased by mere death," I explained.

- I need to become even stronger to stand next to him. I still lack many things.

"You can make up for whatever you're lacking," I said.

Song Soo-Kyung stared quietly at his hands.

- If… you transplant his eye into me, could I see the things he had been able to see? Will I be connected to the God of Sunset?

"I won't deny it," I answered.

-…

Song Soo-Kyung lowered his head.

I honestly thought it would take him longer, but he spoke a few minutes later.

- *Whoo*… The Blue Guild has his body…

'Wow… '

I was appalled by this bastard's viciousness.

- Shit… is there no way I can get his body?

'This bastard is actually crazy.'

It seemed that there was a reason why Belial had applauded him.

'As a human being, shouldn't you at least maintain your humanity?'

- Shit.

'And you call yourself human?'

I wanted him to do what he was about to do, but wasn't it happening a little too fast?

'You should think a little more about it. You're so creepy.'

He was so creepy that goosebumps broke out all over me, but I couldn't stop myself from smiling.

- The eye and the heart of the Son of Light.

"…"

- Lee Ki-Young's eye. His heart. His eye. Yeah. His eye.

"It is your choice whether you want to become complete or not," I told him.

- It's impossible to sneak in.

Even I thought that it was impossible.

- Perhaps I should insist on obtaining his body.

The better option was to use politics to obtain my body. Of course, getting close to the body by lying to them about being chosen by the light wouldn't be a bad option either.

- No. That's too… dangerous. He might get angry.

‘So you’re aware of that.’

It was true that he only had a few ways to go about it, but it didn’t hurt to try.

He called someone and started talking into the Goddess' Mirror.

I stared into his eyes and saw that his eyes had taken in the color of a bottomless abyss.

- I want you to prepare trustworthy people. Make sure they're ready to go.

‘Villain Song has become a runaway train.’

- Yes. We need to change the location of the meeting we’re having with the Blue Guild.

‘Wow, you’re really the devil. These past few days have turned you into the devil.'

- Mr. Lee Ki-Young… I need the body of the late honorary cardinal.

Song Soo-Kyung's expression distorted into that of a greedy and filthy man, ready to desecrate the corpse of the light who had sacrificed everything for the continent. At this moment, he truly had the face of a demon.

CHAPTER 805
THE LAST (38)

“Isn’t it fun?” Belial asked.

“How could it not be fun?” I asked back.

“Life is so long, which is why we need stories like this. I know I’ve said this before, but your project is a work of art. I'm really grateful for the fact that you've kept me entertained over these past few days. What do you think about having some wine?” Belial suggested.

“I’d appreciate that, Belial,” I replied.

“Looks like you've corrupted him completely,” Belial commented.

“Well, he was problematic from the start,” I said.

“Talent is necessary to bring out that side of humans. There isn’t a single human in the world who can turn their back on darkness. Bringing out the darkness inside humans and stimulating their hidden, dark desires is what we must do as demons.

"It may not seem much in your eyes, but your cunning and disgusting tongue is capable of stimulating that darkness. You’re talented in poking into the small crevice and stimulating the darkness inside of it,” Belial said.

Well, the lighter the canvas is, the easier it is to dye it black,” I told him.

“…”

“…”

So far…” Belial trailed off.

“…”

“I had seen many scumbags so far, but you're really something. You've truly surprised me. I don't even know what to say, *haha*,” Belial chuckled.

‘Mr. Bel, is that a compliment or an insult?’

“The light shines brightly, which is the only reason I can bring out the darkness! *Hahahaha!*” I laughed.

“Disgusting human! No, you’re a disgusting demon! *Hahaha!”* Belial said. There had to be a reason why out of the many demons, Belial was the one who had reacted to my soul and mana.

“So, what are you going to do next?” Belial asked.

“I’m not sure. I haven’t decided yet. At this point, I want to prepare a memorable stage, but there are many variables,” I answered.

“*Hm*… is that right? Variables… variables…” Belial mumbled.

I shooed away the silver light that was being hostile toward Belial.

Belial took another sip of his wine and said, “So you’re thinking about what's going to happen afterward."

“Yes, my plan isn't perfect, but it's something like that,” I told him.

Belial nodded as if he understood and even though I didn’t explain the details, he seemed to agree with it.

He was probably thinking that since we were already using Song Soo-Kyung, we might as well go all the way with him.

It wasn't a ton of effort, but I *did* put some work into it, so Belial was trying to see whether Song Soo-Kyung was worthy of becoming a puzzle piece. After all, he was already a pretty useful card.

Emotionally, I wanted to kill him with a single blow regardless of whether he was a useful card or not. Thinking about it rationally, he had to be assigned a role. I could definitely get a lot of value out of him…

‘Demon contractor.’

No, no. He was the demon itself. It was a bit of a stretch, but I couldn’t ignore the image that popped up in my head.

‘I think I can really get a lot of value out of him.’

The reason Ji-Hye noona was doing all of this while minimizing contact with me was because she wanted to avoid Lucifer’s eyes and accumulate achievements. Her actions would make even more sense if she knew about my contract with Lucifer.

‘She probably thinks that she needs holy power.’

Of course, she was gathering fear instead of faith, but fear could be converted into points as well, so it wasn't that difficult of a conclusion to reach. I came to the same conclusion as her, which was why I was collecting holy power as well.

‘Insurance.’

It was insurance that could rewind time whenever something unexpected occurred.

Anyway, Song Soo-Kyung’s potential to become a villain was bothering me.

“While we’re on that topic…” I trailed off.

“…”

“If something happens to my corpse, will something happen to me as well?” I asked.

“Nothing will happen to you, and there aren't going to be any serious issues upon your return to that world. As for your heart… well… complications may arise if it remains unattached for too long, but you’re going to get it back, anyway.

"Your status will not change even if you have the body of a lowly mortal. It's a bit different, but… they are actually a great example. I mean, look at these shining insects…” Belial pointed.

I turned my head and saw the blue and brown lights comforting the silver light that I had shooed away. I saw them trying to stop the silver insect that got up with determination to fight Belial.

I had an idea of what Belial was talking about.

“I think I understand what you’re talking about. The body…”

“A body is just a body. If you want to descend to the real world, you have to ensure that you can afford the price that you must pay rather than revive your body,” Belial interrupted.

“I’m aware of that,” I said.

“But…” Belial paused.

“Yes?”

“No… It’s nothing. I think I know what you’re thinking. *Ha… Hahaha!*” Belial laughed.

‘He’s too quick-witted.’

Things were pretty fun these days, but Belial seemed to be expecting things to get even more fun. It was like he was begging me to execute my plan.

“Amazing. Simply amazing. It’s a really great plan!” he shouted.

‘I think it’s a great plan as well. I think it’s going to be fun, too.’

The storytelling was perfect.

The demon responsible for the strange phenomena across the continent…

The deceiver had deceived every single human on the continent, denied the existing light, and even deceived himself to corrupt the light.

That demon was none other than Song Soo-Kyung…

I felt a shiver down my spine just imagining him becoming a great demon capable of outsmarting even his fellow demons to steal the eye of the Son of Light.

He had to be that evil to make the denizens tremble in fear.

If our Ji-Hye noona jumped into the fray by then, it'd be even better.

She could also be stubborn about her plans to create a scapegoat that would take all the blame and die. However, there was a chance that it wouldn't be the case. She could be aware of Villain Song's existence, and she could also be aware that…

'I have a plan in progress.'

I liked the fact that I stood to gain a ton of points. I might be able to get just as much holy power as I had obtained during the 27th Legion incident.

However, Kim Hyun-Sung and the sons of light might end up stoning Song Soo-Kyung…

"What should I prepare? *Hahaha!*" Belial asked.

'Mr. Bel is having too much fun.'

"I'll call Rimoura," Belial suggested.

"It's okay. You don't have to call her right now," I told him.

"Are you still thinking about it? It's going to be an amazing revenge as well as a great story. You need to achieve results, right? This is it. This is the best-case scenario, so I don't understand why you're hesitating.

"You might obtain more holy power than we had obtained during the 27th Legion summoning incident. No, you'll definitely get much more than that. At the time, we had to invest a ton, but what we're about to do basically requires no investment. I don't like playing with numbers, but if I had to convert them into numbers…" Belial trailed off.

'He's really enjoying this.'

Belial didn't seem all that interested in how much profit we'd obtain from all this. The only reason he was taking out all these documents was to convince me.

It had been a while since he was *this* entertained, so he probably didn't want to miss this chance to entertain himself more.

I had never seen him *this* excited before.

Did he look that excited when the Son of Light was corrupted?

He wasn't in his human form back then so I couldn't really tell, but I was sure he had a similar expression at the time.

"I'm sure you have an idea as to how much it's going to be," Belial said.

'I do.'

"Are you hesitating because something might happen to your body in the real world?" Belial asked.

'I'm not sure.'

"No, that's not it. It's true that I feel uncomfortable physically, but since you said that there aren't going to be any problems, then I'm willing to lose an eye. If I can earn that much profit, then I'm willing to do it.

"The problem is whether it'll be enough to cover the entire budget. Benigoa and I will be receiving a large sum… so it'll be profitable for the God of Sunset as well," I explained.

'It's honestly all mine.'

It could be used in a variety of situations. It could be used in the most crucial moment, and it could also be used to restore the continent or even update it.

"Do you not enjoy waiting? Looks like you want things to be done right now," Belial said.

"That's not true. It's not that long so I have no problem waiting," I told him.

I sipped some wine quietly to quench my thirst.

Belial definitely wanted to set the mood because we had been listening to his choice of classical music for a while now.

I turned my head and saw Belial doing the same thing as me. We were staring at the rangers on the screen.

There was one assassin who I thought was the top assassin on the continent and the rest were high-ranking rangers.

Even I thought that they were fast, and they were moving as if they were one with the shadows. They were trained professionally for infiltration missions alone, so their display of skills made sense. I was sure they had run many simulations of this before.

They entered the Blue Guild while minimizing their hand signals.

I wanted to believe that they could actually achieve something, but nothing was going to happen because the guild members already knew that they were going to break into the guild.

'Do they really think that the Blue Guild is stupid?'

Our lovely regressor, Miss Kim Mi-Young, and Jo Hye-Jin were having a meeting, and I could tell they were tired because the meeting lasted an entire night. Ordinary guild staffers weren't skilled enough to stop them, but…

'Who's on night duty today?'

A figure fell from above and landed in front of the rangers.

I nodded after seeing them take out two daggers.

'It's Park Lian.'

The enemy rangers spread out immediately.

Someone yelled, and Park Lian moved quickly in response, cutting off the heads of two people. A ranger who looked pretty skilled attacked with his dagger, but Park Lian leaned back and dodged his attack.

Then, the ranger's arms and legs were severed before he could even scream. Park Lian probably did that to prevent him from committing suicide, but the ranger melted into a puddle of flesh and blood.

Park Lian frowned at the sight.

'A curse.'

It seemed that a curse was placed on them before the mission, and it was a curse that would melt them into a puddle of flesh and blood the moment they were incapacitated.

Park Lian had to have reached the same conclusion as me because she tried to find a different way to capture one of the rangers.

Park Lian melted into the shadows with her two daggers.

Honestly, I thought Park Lian would be able to handle all of them by herself, but the intruders weren't here to fight or assassinate the guild members.

They were here to snatch my corpse, and they had to have thought that this was their only chance because I saw the remaining rangers entering the guild house through a different entrance.

They dispatched too many men to barge into a single guild house.

They were breaking into the Blue Guild, so it was understandable that they'd dispatch this many men, but… even when taking that into account…

'There are still too many of them, so I'm surprised that they've prepared thoroughly.'

A deafening explosion echoed not too far away from them. They retreated, and Yoo Ah-Young emerged from a room. She looked like she had no time to put on her armor because she joined the fight with just her hammer…

'They won't be able to take her down.'

I was sure the rangers wouldn't even try to fight Yoo Ah-Young. They had the numbers advantage, but there wasn't an assassin alive who would want to fight against a tank with high Endurance.

Big and small battles broke out everywhere.

The battles were one-sided, so I didn't have much to say.

The top ranger on the continent managed to reach my grave, but the problem started

there.

- W-W-Who are you guys…

-…

- W-W-W-Who are you? Who… are you?

I saw Jung Ha-Yan biting her fingernails.

CHAPTER 806
THE LAST (39)

I felt like I had become a dungeon master.

‘Damn… ’

I imagined the invading rangers as adventurers who had come to clear the dungeon, which was the Blue Guild, and I realized that perhaps the Blue Guild was truly a dungeon.

‘It’s definitely going to be a Mythic-rank dungeon.’

Actually, the guild members of the Blue Guild could be considered part of the continent's upper echelon, so the entire guild could be beyond Mythic.

In fact, the original members of the Blue Guild were unrealistically strong to the extent that the members who joined later ended up becoming undervalued. However, it wasn’t an exaggeration to say that Lee Chang-Ryeol and Yoo Ah-Young were top adventurers on the continent.

Even Alps, the newest rookie, would definitely grow up to be a skilled adventurer; it was pretty clear from the way she was dealing with the assassins at the moment.

Of course, the new guild members weren’t the main bosses. For a dungeon to receive the Mythic rank, the named monsters had to be powerful enough to match that rank. In that sense, Park Deok-Gu would definitely be suitable as the first of the dungeon's many bosses.

‘They have to defeat him in time, or he'll call over his comrades. He has the ability to call reinforcements, so it's perfect.’

Kim Ye-Ri and Ahn Ki-Mo would appear to reinforce him.

As expected, the three appeared and were trying to wrap up the situation.

Park Deok-Gu was already hard to take down, but he was going to become even harder to take down because Ahn Ki-Mo was going to heal him while Kim Ye-Ri was going to kite.

Ordinary parties—no, even clans or guilds might not be able to break apart the encirclement of these three. In addition to their close relationship, they also had a synergy that couldn't be ignored. They were actively making up for each other's weaknesses, and they had also been working together to bring their teamwork to a whole new level.

'The second boss… '

She wasn't here, but the second boss would probably be Jo Hye-Jin.

She could be considered a superhuman, but she had yet to achieve much, and she didn't really have any impactful moments. However, she was one of the guild members who had overcome *that* wall.

Jo Hye-Jin was strong enough to be called a transcendental being, and I could guarantee that there were only a few people on the continent who could defeat Jo Hye-Jin once she was armed to the teeth.

'She'll be harder to defeat than she looks.'

There was a reason behind the existence of the cavalry class. Jo Hye-Jin just needed enough space, and she'd be able to crush her enemies on horseback; she'd be able to break even their armor and shield.

The final boss would obviously be our lovely regressor, Kim Hyun-Sung.

He actually didn't need any explanation.

If a dungeon based on the Blue Guild actually existed, it'd be pretty famous for many different reasons. It was going to become famous for being impossible to clear, and I was sure that the Sacred Democratic Country—no, the entire continent would gather funds and power to clear the dungeon.

That was what those guys in the Committee were doing right now. However, the guild would soon become infamous because of a hidden boss, which was like what I was seeing right now.

‘It’s really scary.’

Upon breaking into the alchemy workshop, they'd encounter Han Sora, the fake named adventurer, and then they'd encounter the hidden boss in the mortuary, where the body of the Son of Light was located.

‘That's scary… ’

If I were an adventurer, I wouldn’t want to encounter a hidden boss. If the intruders had known about the fact that Jung Ha-Yan was here, I was sure that they wouldn’t even dare to step into the Blue Guild House.

‘They didn’t really think they’d be able to clear the dungeon, right?’

I wasn't exaggerating, but Jung Ha-Yan’s existence was basically a calamity to all intruders. Our hidden boss looked so unstable as she stared at the guys who had come here to steal the dungeon's treasure.

‘…’

I had no idea if they were aware of what was going to happen to them in a few moments, but they were surprisingly relaxed.

‘These bastards are out of their minds… ’

I understood why they were so relaxed. It was all because Jung Ha-Yan was a mage.

‘Idiots.’

They thought that Jung Ha-Yan was still a mage at the end of the day, even if her mana was transcendent level and even if she had inexplicable spells.

It was true that there was no way an ordinary mage could survive the attack of a group of assassins, and these people were probably thinking along the lines of that.

They thought they could take her down easily, as she was nothing more than a mage.

As expected, they exchanged looks in response to Jung Ha-Yan's question.

They signaled at each other to suppress her rather than kill her. They were basically

challenging her. The ranger who attempted to grab Jung Ha-Yan from behind didn't seem to have any suspicion. He was definitely thinking that they just had to suppress her, and they'd be able to clear the Blue Guild House Dungeon.

Obviously, it didn't take long for him to start questioning the situation.

He could no longer move his dagger, and he felt like he was being held by something.

He tried to resist whatever was binding him, but he couldn't muster any resistance.

Moments later, he melted slowly starting from the hand that was holding the dagger.

'Shit… '

- *Ah… Ahhh…*

'Ahh… '

- *AAAHHHH! AAAAHHH! Aaaaaaaaack!!!*

They were trained not to scream, SO I couldn't believe how quickly he started screaming.

- *Aaaahhh! Aaaaaaack!!!*

He screamed so loudly that his scream filled the guild house. The intruders became nervous at the confusing situation. The scream was so bad that even I started to feel scared for the intruders, so I was sure that they felt worse.

- W-W-W-Who are you… I-I asked you a question.

The guys who jumped at her also fell to the ground.

- *Ahhhhhh! Ack!*

I had no idea how she was doing it, but the rangers' figures were getting twisted in a grotesque way. Their bones were getting twisted in the strangest directions, and I could hear disturbing cracking noises from deep within their bodies.

I had no idea how to describe it, but I was staring at a human being contorted into a

tiny ball in real-time.

- *Ah,* I-I shouldn't kill them… I-I-I need them alive so I can open up their heads.

To make things worse, I couldn't understand how the ranger, who had transformed into a small ball of flesh, managed to survive.

I was sure her comment about opening their heads wasn't a bluff.

The other rangers were in the same situation.

They knew something was off, but they still charged at her with the intention of killing her, but of course, they couldn't get anywhere near her.

Our dungeon's hidden boss would never be defeated, damn it.

The things I was seeing in that room were so unrealistic that I couldn't quite describe it.

It was a grotesque, eerie disaster that not even horror or gory movies could replicate. I thought I had a pretty strong stomach, but I didn't have the courage to keep watching.

Blood splattered everywhere along with screams, and I felt like I was staring at hell in real time.

- *Ahhhhhhh!*

- *Ah… Aaack! Ahhhhhhhhh!!!*

- H-Help me! Help… me! Help!

- *Aaaaaaaaaack!*

- *Blech… Bleeeeeeech…* Please… Pleaseee…

'Shit… '

- *Aaaack!* H-Help…

- A-All of you came here for oppa, right? R-Right?

- *Aaah… Aaaah…*

- Y-Y-You came to take o-oppa away. R-Right? R-Right?!

- *Ack… Ahhh!*

- Y-You think I'll let you take him? Y-You think I'll let you do that… Y-You'll never take him. I won't let you have him.

- *Ahhhhhhhhh! Aaaaaaack!*

It seemed that Jung Ha-Yan was more pent up than I thought. I wasn't sure if she was just getting really heated, but she was getting more and more excited.

Perhaps she needed to vent out the stress that had been accumulating inside of her because of the things that had been going on outside lately. Her cute plan of becoming the God of Magic and ascending to heaven was still in progress, but it was getting delayed.

More importantly, she felt really pressured about not being able to see me.

'These bastards came at the wrong time… '

Still, what she was doing was too cruel. It felt like Jung Ha-Yan was starting to lose reason. As always, it felt like she was being delusional once more. She was also too angry to make any reasonable decisions.

- You'll… never get him… He's mine… He's mine. W-Who are you? W-Why are you trying to take him away? Why? Why are you doing this? Why do you keep bothering me? Why?! Why?!

I wasn't sure why Jung Ha-Yan had a dagger in the first place, but she took it out as if she wanted to get a taste of using a weapon.

- I-It's dangerous. It's dangerous… It's a dangerous situation…

'What's dangerous? It's not dangerous at all. You're the most dangerous one here.'

- W-W-Who's after him?! Who is it?! Who… Why won't you leave him alone… Why are you trying to take him away… *Kgh*… It's making me anxious. I'm feeling really anxious. I'm already suffering… It's making me really nervous.

'What are you so nervous about? Stop it. Stop being so nervous. Where the hell is Han Sora? She needs to hurry up.'

Han Sora, who was like a 24-hour surveillance system dedicated to Jung Ha-Yan, was nowhere to be seen for some reason. I started wondering where she was at the moment.

'You're being lazy. You shouldn't be lazy when you're getting paid so much money. I didn't offer you a high salary so you can act like this.'

It looked like Han Sora hadn't forgotten her duty because I saw her running over in a hurry. I was sure she was really shocked when Jung Ha-Yan suddenly disappeared while they were working together.

However, she had to have realized that something serious had happened.

- Please… Please… O God. O God.

She was a black mage, so I didn't understand why she was looking for god.

However, her actions showed how desperate she was at the moment. She probably thought that she was racing against time. She could stop Jung Ha-Yan to a certain extent, but she wasn't confident about handling her once she had lost it completely.

- W-W-Why are you bothering me?!

Jung Ha-Yan was slowly becoming mad.

Fortunately, Han Sora arrived just in time.

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan! Miss Jung Ha-Yan! Where are you?!

-…

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan!

- S-Sora? *Heuk…*

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan!

- Soraaaa…

- Are you hurt anywhere?

Han Sora looked uneasy as she looked around. She seemed happy about the fact that she managed to find Jung Ha-Yan.

- Soraaa…

- I'm here. I'm right here.

Jung Ha-Yan was covered in blood, but she still gave Han Sora a tight hug.

- I-I think they're trying to take oppa. W-What should I do? What should I do?

- He's… still here, right? It'll be fine. Calm down. Nothing happened yet, and you're not alone, Miss Jung Ha-Yan… I'm here, and the other guild members are here as well. First, let me find out what happened. Stay here. I'll try contacting the other guild members.

- Okay…

- It looks like they're wrapping things up. T-They've contacted the guild master as well.

- H-Hyun-Sung oppa, too?

- Yes. It looks like the guild master is on his way here right now, so don't worry. Mr. Park Deok-Gu is coming as well. Nothing will happen. Lian…

- Lian?

- *Ah*… I mean, I just received a message that said Miss Park Lian is currently questioning the rangers that they had captured. We'll soon find out who's been targeting the sub guild master and why they broke into the Blue Guild. So I think it's best if you say goodbye to him and rest a bit. You should take a shower or fill a bath

with warm water and relax…

- I-I-I want to stay here.

- Okay, then how about we stay here until the guild master arrives?

- Okay…

- I was surprised because you suddenly disappeared. You're really okay, right?

- Y-Yeah… I'm okay. I-I'm feeling better now. *Ah*… I need to open their heads.

- You can do it after taking a break, or you can do it tomorrow. It's really late, so I think it's best if you rest for today.

- Okay. W-Will you open them with me tomorrow?

- *Ah*… sure…

'This is probably impossible.'

If possible, I wanted to play along with Belial and make a quick buck, but…

'I don't think the plan is possible… '

I thought hard and long about it, but there was no way this dungeon could be cleared.

"I don't think it'll be possible," I said.

"I'm sure… there's a way," Belial said.

Kim Hyun-Sung was on his way back to the guild house.

"I think it's impossible…" I told Belial.

"…"

Kim Hyun-Sung looked as if the world had betrayed him.

CHAPTER 807
THE LAST (40)

- I think he’s here, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. How about you leave this place to the guild master and go rest? You haven’t slept for days…

- *Ah*… Okay…

- You should say goodbye to the sub guild master.

- Okay. I-I also need to recover my mana. W-Wait for me, Sora.

- Okay, take your time. I also…

I started thinking that perhaps Jung Ha-Yan was in a better situation than Kim Hyun-Sung.

‘What do I do with Hyun-Sung?’

Jung Ha-Yan entered the mortuary and looked down at me.

Obviously, there was nothing wrong with my body.

They had cast spells that wouldn't allow my body to decompose, but even without those spells, my body wouldn't decompose so easily. There was no warmth in my body, but it didn’t look stiff or tense. My skin looked pretty soft, and I looked like I was alive at a glance because of the variety of spells that had been cast on me.

Jung Ha Yan had to be anxious upon hearing that Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Deok-Gu were coming, as she kept casting curses and spells. She stroked my cheek and looked around briefly before kissing me and smiling.

‘As usual, she’s kind of strange… '

At least she was healthy. Well, I wasn't sure if "healthy" was the right word, but the "sedative" that had been used on her was effective.

She was so calm that I found it strange rather than nerve-wracking. After all, this was something unimaginable long ago.

- Sora unni, the guild master is getting updated on the current situation.

- Oh yeah?

- Yes. We're currently trying to figure out what happened. However, we barely took any damage. The guild storage and the other places didn't suffer any damage, so it's safe to assume that the enemy was after the sub guild master.

- This is bad… Miss Jung Ha-Yan will come out soon. Inform the guild master what happened at the mortuary. Once you're done with the damage report, let me know.

- Okay, Sora unni.

- S-Sora? I-I'm here.

- I'll… leave that to you, Miss Park Lian.

- What?

- Thank you for your hard work, Miss Park Lian.

- *Ah*… Yes, no problem… Miss Sora…

- Are you done, Miss Jung Ha-Yan?

- Y-Yeah… Was that… her just now?

- *Ah*, it's nothing. She just gave me the damage report just now. Shall we get going?

It was true that ung Ha-Yan was mentally healthy, and it was all because of her "sedative."

It felt like walking on thin ice or walking on a tightrope, but Han Sora was helping her keep it together, so Jung Ha-Yan probably wouldn't cause any trouble on the same scale as the trouble she had caused long ago.

Of course, it was too early to let my guard down. Anything could happen, after all.

Jung Ha-Yan's existence alone was dangerous as well, but…

'It's meaningful.'

It was unlikely that she'd make extreme decisions now, as she didn't do something like that when I died.

The problem was Kim Hyun-Sung.

'…'

The Regressor Instruction Manual was roaring at me, telling me that Kim Hyun-Sung's mind was on the brink of collapse. I'd be grateful if Jo Hye-Jin could become his Han Sora, but that wasn't even an option here.

I glanced to the side and saw Kim Hyun-Sung's face.

He was talking to Park Deok-Gu and Hwang Jung-Yeon with a serious face.

- I'm sure they were after hyung-nim.

- Is that right?

- I don't know why, but it's strange that they didn't attack the other facilities. Miss Jung-Yeon said that hyung-nim's body is extremely valuable because there's a large amount of holy power inside of him. It's not strange that they'd try to claim that holy power for themselves, but they're definitely mad…

— I couldn't even imagine that something like this would actually happen. What kind of crazy bastard would think about doing something like this? I just can't understand what they're thinking.

-…

- We've questioned the rangers, but we didn't get anything substantial. They must've received this request through a convoluted network.

Hwang Jung-Yeon spoke cautiously.

- It could be from the black market.

- The black market?

- Yes, sir. I think I've seen one of the rangers before. If I remember correctly, I think they're from the black market of the Republic. We'll have to do a proper investigation, but…

- Is there a reason the black market would target hyung-nim's body?

- I can't say for sure, but if they're after financial gain or the power inside his body, there's no other way to trade that aside from on the b-b-black market.

Hwang Jung-Yeon was being careful around Kim Hyun-Sung.

Of course, Kim Hyun-Sung's face became even more serious. It was as if he was suppressing the anger boiling inside him. I could understand why he thought that the world had betrayed him.

'At this rate, he might end up distrusting humans. Our Hyun-Sung won't be able to trust anyone. The world has been too harsh on him.'

At this rate, he might end up thinking that the world wasn't worth saving.

He was the hero who had saved the continent while being forced to carry the burden that he never wanted to carry in the first place.

He also didn't save the continent because he wanted to do so in the first place.

He did it because he felt responsible and because it was the wish of the person he cherished the most. However, the continent and the people he had saved were treating that same person as some kind of item and were planning on trading his corpse in the black market…

I couldn't imagine how betrayed he had to be feeling at the moment.

The situation was so ridiculous that he might start laughing at it, and I was sure he was thinking about why the Son of Light had sacrificed himself just to protect these bastards.

I was sure he was questioning why he had endured all those painful times just to save these scums and whether this was really the right thing to do or not.

As expected, Kim Hyun-Sung looked exhausted, and he was deeply disappointed by the evil and humans of the continent.

- Are you sure it's not related to the strange phenomena happening on the continent right now?

- I'll probably have to look into that as well, but… the chances are pretty low. I think they're well aware of what's going on throughout the continent. The fact that this happened while you were away…

-…

- They were very organized and trained to say that the black market had planned all of this, so we can't ignore the possibility that a major guild or a large city is involved in this and that they're using the black market as a cover.

- We might get some information when Miss Ha-Yan does a proper investigation tomorrow, but it's hard to come up with a conclusion right now. We have to be cautious since the continent is in a chaotic state. I think it's best if I do the investigation with Miss Ha-Yan tomorrow… Is that okay?

- I… should be asking you to do that. That would be great.

- Bro…

- From now on, we'll be adjusting the guild's security level.

- I knew it. Then…

- Consider us in a state of war. Those daring enough to enter the guild house without permission will be considered an intruder. Tell the guild members to kill any intruders on sight. I'll tell Mr. Chang-Ryeol… about the black market investigation… tomorrow in the meeting room.

- Alright, bro.

- And… thank you.

-…

-…

- There’s no need to thank us. You’re not the only one who wants to protect hyung-nim, and the one who protected the mortuary was noonim. I honestly didn’t do anything. Anyway, hang in there, bro. You don’t need to blame yourself. You can’t always protect him, so we need to do our part as well.

- Right.

- Anyway, thanks for coming all this way. I’ll wrap things up, so let’s follow Bro’s advice and talk about the details tomorrow…

- Okay.

Park Deok-Gu had definitely noticed that Kim Hyun-Sung was feeling out of it because I saw him patting the latter's back. Kim Hyun-Sung's expression was dangerous, and Park Deok-Gu knew that; otherwise, he wouldn’t have comforted him like that.

- *Ha… haha…*

Kim Hyun-Sung was laughing bitterly at himself while looking at the floor upon Park Deok-Gu and Hwang Jung-Yeon's departure.

- *Ha… ha…*

He didn’t shed any tears, and his eyes looked empty. He still laughed bitterly at himself even while the guild staff and members were cleaning up the mess.

-…

‘The time bomb is about to explode… ’

He didn't express his anger on the spot like what Doom Hyun-Sung had done, but his anger was accumulating slowly inside of him.

It was a type of anger that was scarier than the anger of someone who had a penchant for expressing their anger immediately.

I couldn’t imagine how far Villain Song’s cute plan was going to go.

‘I should’ve done it right the first time.’

Of course, I wasn't looking down on the rangers' investment. It was like investing in really important resources, and the operation itself was quite big.

Their plan would’ve been successful if their target were an ordinary major guild. Of course, Jo Hye-Jin, the second-in-command in the Blue Guild, and Kim Hyun-Sung, the final boss of the Blue Guild, were missing when they launched their attack.

However, Villain Song seemed to have forgotten that the Blue Guild wasn’t an ordinary major guild. We had a mage who had already overcome the wall, and she could easily make quick work of the rangers.

‘If he knew that Ha-Yan was strong enough to fight Hee-Ra noona, he wouldn’t have done something so unreasonable.’

I was sure the only thing he could remember about her was her powerful spells with a long casting time, which required her to be under everyone's protection while she was casting them.

It wasn't really strange, as Jung Ha-Yan was the only mage on the continent who had overcome the wall, so it was understandable that they had no idea about Jung Ha-Yan's true strength.

The lack of information had led the bastards to test the waters. Sure, they had acquired information, but it meant the Blue Guild House dungeon had just gotten even harder to clear.

I was sure many things would change tomorrow.

Jung Ha-Yan had cast spells on my body, and the Blue Guild's security level was raised to a state of war level. I was worried about the decisions that Kim Hyun-Sung was going to make in the future. If he made strange decisions because of his overflowing distrust of humans, then the plan to protect my body would end up being a failure.

‘It’s such a waste.’

I had yet to purchase the coin, and it still had a chance to go to the moon, so I couldn’t give up on it so easily. It was similar to the time when I had purchased the

Holy Sword Coin.

Moreover, Belial was trying to convince me to purchase it, so my decision was definitely right.

'Looks like I'm going to have to start cheering for him.'

- Mr. Ki-Young… What should I do? What… on earth… should I do?

I saw him collapse before my body, and the sight broke my heart.

'Our Hyun-Sung is suffering so much. He needs to be happy as soon as possible… The world is making him suffer. It really is making him suffer.'

- I don't know what you want to protect or what you want. In this situation, I… *ha… haha…* I know it's meaningless, but… Mr. Ki-Young… the continent and… humans aren't as innocent as you think.

- They might not be… worth protecting. I know that goes against what you sacrificed for, but… but… I don't know what to do. I don't know what to expect.

'You need to pull yourself together. A hero shouldn't be acting like this.'

If Kim Hyun-Sung was waiting to hear my voice, then there was only so much I could say to him.

True light was about seeing the hope and potential of humans even in the hardest trying times and amidst doubt.

"Not every human being is evil, Sunset Swordsman."

CHAPTER 808
THE LAST (41)

“Every human being has a little bit of goodness in their heart, and it should be nurtured and cherished. Sometimes, they make wrong decisions, but those mistakes don't represent their lives and souls,” I said.

- Mr. Ki-Young?

Kim Hyun-Sung probably wasn’t expecting to hear my voice.

- Mr. Ki-Young…

He was hearing my voice in his head, but he was looking at my body. I wasn’t sure if he was trying to talk to me face to face, but it was definitely just an instinctive reaction. He seemed anxious as if he was afraid that we might get disconnected.

He was certainly going to argue with what I said, but he seemed to be focusing more on my voice than the content itself.

Of course, it didn’t take long for him to come back to his senses.

I was sure he knew why I was talking to him, and he definitely knew what I wanted as well. He looked like there were many things he wanted to say to me, and it was obvious since he was complaining and questioning things just a few moments ago.

He looked like he was still thinking, but the first thing he said was of course…

- I’m sorry, Mr. Ki-Young. I’m sorry.

I felt uncomfortable seeing him live a life where all he did was apologize.

‘Why are you always apologizing?’

His words were meaningful. I wasn’t sure why he was apologizing. Was it because he couldn't meet my expectations? Was it because he still hadn't brought me back?

It could be because of what just happened, but I could tell that his apology was sincere.

'It's not because you're thinking that you couldn't meet my expectations, right? I haven't even started yet, and you've already interrupted me.'

"I don't think you've done anything that requires an apology. I'm always grateful for you, Sunset Swordsman," I told him.

- I…

"I… I should be the one who should apologize to you," I mumbled.

- You don't have to apologize for anything, Mr. Ki-Young.

"But…"

And that was when Kim Hyun-Sung's expression changed slightly.

'What's wrong with him?'

He frowned and looked extremely sad.

I had no idea why his expression changed, but it was my first time seeing that expression on his face. He had to have realized that this was going to be a long conversation because it seemed like many different thoughts were popping up in his head.

However, he wasn't doubting me; it was more like his reply to what I said earlier. His eyes looked empty, but there was anger inside of them, which wasn't like Kim Hyun-Sung.

It was strange to see him being angry at me.

- So you knew.

"…"

- You knew all along.

"…"

- I'm sure you knew—I'm sure of it!

'Did you just yell at me?'

- You knew this was going to happen and that your body would be in danger! Why?! Why?! Why didn't you tell us?! Why did you just let this happen?! Why didn't you tell me?! Why didn't you ask Miss Hye-Jin for help?!

'Are you crazy? You bastard. How dare you get angry at me!'

- Why did you just sit by and watch? How can you… How can you act so calm even after experiencing that… Shit!

'Shit? Shit? You bastard… '

"I understand the frustration you're feeling, Sunset Swordsman," I said.

- No! You don't understand anything! You can't understand. There's no way you would understand what I'm thinking, and I'm sure you won't understand this frustration. I'm not a hero.

- I'm not as amazing as you think I am. I'm not someone that forgives and accepts everything easily. I don't care about humans being inherently good or that we need to cherish the light in their hearts.

"Sunset…"

- Why! Did you… just watch? Why?! How much more will you sacrifice yourself until you're satisfied? How much more will you sacrifice yourself?! It's your body! Damn it! Damn it! I'm tired of it now. Every time! Every time!

- You're already asleep, so every single thing you have to do doesn't necessarily have to involve humans and the continent… It's okay to be a little selfish, damn it!

'Are you seriously out of your mind?'

I knew he was going to argue back a little, but it had been a while since I saw him so worked up. He was doing this as himself and not as Doom Hyun-Sung, which made

the situation so ridiculous that I was at a loss for words.

'Wow, I really want to go down there.'

'Let's see if you can say all that after seeing the wound on my stomach. Shit, I guarantee you won't be able to say anything.'

We were so far apart that I couldn't pretend to be in pain or frightened, so I felt like I was at a disadvantage. Kim Hyun-Sung had to be more worked up than I thought.

- Say something! Answer me!

'I won't say anything.'

- Why did you just watch?!

'I'm not going to say anything.'

- Mr. Ki-Young? Mr. Ki-Young!

It was kind of awkward, but I decided to leave him alone until he calmed down.

As expected, he looked surprised moments later.

- Mr. Ki-Young… Mr. Ki-Young?

'You did this. I can't talk to you unless you're ready to talk.'

- I'm sorry, Mr. Ki-Young…

He had to apologize. I was sure that even Solomon would take my side on this one.

- I'm sorry. I-I got too angry. I… I didn't mean it. I lied about not caring and about not cherishing the light inside humans, so…

"…"

- Mr. Ki-Young? I really didn't mean it. I know what you're trying to say. I was just so angry… I was angry, so I made a mistake. I thought of things I shouldn't have thought about. I'm really sorry if you're disappointed in me. I really didn't mean it.

'He's definitely thinking about something else.'

Kim Hyun-Sung had definitely assumed that we ended up losing connection to each other because of his malice and disillusionment toward humans.

'It makes sense if he has assumed that the only way to connect to the Son of Light is to have a good heart.'

I could tell that he was desperately rejecting his thoughts earlier. However, he didn't have the ability to brainwash himself, so it was like pouring water into a sieve. Despite that, he was telling himself that he needed to respect the good heart that humans had deep inside of them.

It looked like things were going well, but I didn't think this was the right time to force him to listen to what was morally correct.

It was truly unlike Kim Hyung-Sung to act this way, so I was sure he was struggling and feeling pressured by everything that was happening recently.

He was probably bothered by many things, including the press that was still looking for him, and he was probably sad about the sudden threat on the continent. He was morbidly afraid of carrying things by himself, so it was understandable for him to be afraid of losing connection with the only brother who could carry the burden with him.

I was kind of embarrassed to say this, but my existence was the reason he managed to carry out the final fight with the Outer God. I was always shining brightly, and I was the light that had vanquished the regressor's darkness.

I had always been sacrificing myself like a fool.

I could kind of tolerate his anger because he simply wanted to protect the body of the person who carried his burdens with him.

"Sunset Swordsman," I called out.

- Yes! Yes, Mr. Ki-Young! I'm glad. *Ha… haha…* I'm happy… I didn't mean it. Please forget everything I said earlier.

"It's not your fault," I said.

- Yes, yes.

It’s really not your fault.

“I completely understand why you’re angry and disappointed. I understand why you want to abandon your faith in humanity. I’m not asking you to forgive them because that’s your choice to make, but…” I trailed off.

- Yes?

“I just didn’t want to see you lose your humanity. That’s a small wish of mine. I want you to remain human and be happy. I want you to forget about the restraints and the pain. I want you to live your own life. Let go of your guilt and live a healthy life. That’s how I want you to live,” I continued.

-…

“I don’t want to force you to carry the burden, and I don’t want you to abandon your faith in humans as well, Sunset Swordsman. I want you to remember that there are many people cheering for you.

"Don’t forget that there are many people who believe in you and that there are more people walking the right path than those walking the wrong path. Keep in mind that humans are beautiful, full of warmth, and noble,” I explained.

- Okay… okay…

“I know it’s hard, but if you don’t abandon the light…”

Booooooooooooooooooom!

A deafening noise echoed, and a radiant light pervaded the mortuary.

‘You’ve been suffering a lot. Even I think it was really painful. Things might become painful for you again, so you should drink some potion.’

“I will be with you,” I told him.

The radiant light dimmed, revealing a holy sword.

The holy sword reminded me of the red sunset, and I customized it for Kim Hyun-Sung, just like the spear I had customized for Jo Hye-Jin.

It was a stylish weapon even in my eyes. Unfortunately, it wasn't as good as Durandal, but it was good enough to be used as a secondary weapon. The problem was that it was expensive.

'How am I going to make up for this?'

I purchased it with the God of Sunset's holy power, but he didn't have to know that. I had to spend holy power to send the sword as well, so I also had the right to brag about the sword.

- Mr. Ki-Young? This is…

'You already know.'

Kim Hyun-Sung was really interested in great weapons and equipment. Of course, he was interested in griffons as well. Anyway, I was sure he could tell that it was a good sword at a mere glance.

I could tell that he was nervous, but he didn't seem hesitant in accepting the sword.

I found it amusing how he grabbed the sword right away in case it disappeared. We didn't have an extremely spiritual connection, as our connection was merely through the Regressor Instruction Manual, but he seemed happy about the gift.

'It's been a while since I saw him this happy… '

"Have faith," I requested.

- Okay.

"Have faith in the light within people. Receive help and give help. Find those who want to be by your side, join hands with them, and move forward. If something is bothering you, share it with them. If you're struggling, discuss it with them. I know you're not used to doing these things, but…" I trailed off.

-…

“…remember that I’m always with you,” I continued.

-…

“Have faith…”

- Yes… I will… I will… I won’t let you down.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked as if he was going to fulfill my wish at all costs. It seemed like he had overcome his fears and had made a firm resolution.

However, the darkness on the continent—the corrupted hand of darkness was reaching out, and it seemed that he still hadn't noticed its approach.

CHAPTER 809
THE LAST (42)

'I wish I had three bodies.'

It was hard to focus on my work because Song Soo-Kyung, Kim Hyun-Sung, and Jo Hye-Jin kept on calling out to me. Honestly, someone's voice had been echoing in my head since the incident, and it was making it difficult for me to keep it together.

I managed to calm Kim Hyun-Sug down by giving him the holy sword, but it wasn't the case for Song Soo-Kyung, whose plan ended up getting ruined.

Jo Hye-Jin was being noisy as well. I was sure she was as shocked as Kim Hyun-Sung.

As expected, I kept hearing Jo Hye-Jin's voice, so I decided to stop what I was doing and explain the situation to her.

- Sub Guild Master, Sub Guild Master?

"…"

- Sub Guild Master?

"*Ah…*"

- Hey, Ki-Young. Can you hear me?

"I hear you, Hye-Jin. What's wrong?" I asked.

- W-Why! Why haven't you been answering? I've been calling out to you since yesterday!

"…"

- Did you intentionally disconnect our connection?

“It’s nothing like that. I was just busy,” I answered.

- You need to tell me what the hell is going on. Do you know what happened inside the guild? Actually, I’m sure you do.

“I was really busy,” I told her.

- Is it true that you’re the one who gave the sword to the guild master?

“I told him not to say anything,” I mumbled.

- He came to me and told me himself. He said you gave it to him. He said he was looking forward to working with me, and he asked me to support him.

“He must’ve thought it would be okay to tell you since you're a chosen one as well. Are you sure he hasn’t told anyone else?” I asked.

- That’s what it looks like on the outside, but he wrapped the sword in a clean white cloth and has been taking care of it as if it was a treasure, so people have been talking about it. I’m not sure if he inserts mana into it from time to time, but I do see a red light through the cloth.

“How’s the guild doing?” I questioned.

- The atmosphere isn’t that great. Miss Ha-Yan, Miss Jung-Yeon, and Miss Sora are investigating together, but they couldn’t find anything even after looking into the heads of those rangers.

- I’m not sure what they meant by "opening their heads," but if the mages in the guild couldn't find a way, then it's useless even if we submit a request to the Magic Tower.

- Anyway, we adjusted the security level to the highest level yesterday, but the guild master said he’d lower it by a level this morning.

- Wait, you should be answering my question first, not the other way around. Is it true that something else is happening? How come I'm not aware of it.

“I mean… it’s nothing you need to concern yourself over. You don’t have to worry about it, Miss Hye-Jin,” I replied.

- How can I not worry? Rangers broke into the guild because they were targeting your body. You didn't give me this spear to keep me in the dark, right?

"I just need you to focus on other things, Miss Hye-Jin. You need to follow Lee Ji-Hye's tracks. Why are you so worked up over a corpse?" I said.

- You shouldn't talk like that. Do you really think what you're saying is reasonable?

"This is why I didn't want to tell you anything. Didn't I tell you that things are pretty bad here as well?" I asked.

- Do you even know who's behind it? What kind of crazy bastard would do something like this…

"Even if I knew who it was, I can't tell you. There's a rule that I'm prohibited from interfering with the real world. Anyway, don't worry about my corpse. I think it's best if you hand it over," I told her.

-…

"…"

- You're crazy!

"I'm not telling you this to tease you. I think we should really hand it over. Don't ask me the details. Just think of it as God's will. Normally, when gods send a divine message, they make it confusing so that it leaves room for interpretation. Just remember that there's a positive effect later," I explained.

- How can anything positive come out of giving away your corpse?

"I can't tell you. Just keep that in mind," I reminded her.

- Have you actually gone insane?!

'Did you yell at me just now?'

- You're a crazy bastard!

I tried to stay silent after my experience with Kim Hyun-Sung, but I felt uneasy

because Jo Hye-Jin was too worked up.

- Why did you give me a spear in the first place if you were going to do this?

'I'm not telling.'

- You crazy bastard! Lee Ki-Young, you crazy bastard!

She removed the cloth wrapped around the holy spear and stomped on it. I knew it wasn't going to break, but it seemed that she was *really* angry because she brought another spear and started hacking at it.

'This isn't like you.'

- If you were going to hand it over! Why did you give me the spear in the first place?! Why did you make such a big deal out of it?! I'm not going to do it. I'm not!

'What happened to the Hye-Jin who talked about not tarnishing my pride? This isn't like you at all.'

- Crazy bastard! Crazy bastard! Do it alone! I'm not going to do it. Do it yourself!

"Wait…"

- How could you say that to someone who's been waiting for you all day yesterday? You should be telling me something. You crazy scum!

Jo Hye-Jin seemed to be really angry; she wasn't simply throwing a tantrum to try to get information. I understood how she felt because the incident had to have been a bolt out of the blue for her, and I wasn't answering her questions.

She was worried that the situation might get worse, and she had to have lost sleep over it. I was worried that the unbreakable spear would bend if I stayed quiet. I wasn't sure if all the anger that had been accumulating inside of her had finally exploded, but she looked kind of exhausted by the rapidly changing situation.

'Maybe I gave too much information.'

It would've been fine if I acted just like the time I lost my memories, but I probably thought of Jo Hye-Jin as an older sister, just like Ji-Hye noona.

I gave her the spear because I needed a confidant, but the way she handled things was different from mine. I immediately realized that I had addressed a potentially sensitive issue incorrectly, but I had no choice but to continue the conversation.

“Just stop.”

- Stop what?

“Calm down. Do you really think I didn't reply because I'm trying to hide things from you? Just hear me out first,” I said.

- I already know that you don’t plan on telling me the information that I want to hear.

“There’s no way,” I said.

- And even if I hear you out, do you really think I’ll help you with your crazy plan? I'm going to make my stance clear right now. I won’t be cooperating with you.

“My corpse will be returned. You’re just letting them borrow it. Do you really think that I don’t feel uncomfortable about all this? We're talking about my body here; you know better than anyone how much I care about my body,” I explained.

- If you really cared about your body, then the situation wouldn’t have gotten this bad in the first place.

“That’s not true. All of this is part of the plan,” I told her.

- Stop it with the nonsense.

“Everything is connected,” I added.

- Connected?

“I really can’t tell you the details. *Really,* it's not like I don’t want to tell you, but I just can't tell you. I'd get penalized if I told you, and I might end up in a situation where I can’t even talk to you like what I'm doing right now. Anyway, the one thing I *can* tell you is that everything is connected, and there’s a reason behind everything. I don’t really know how I ended up here, but this process will help me reach the end,” I explained.

- Does the guild master know about this?

“Lee Ji-Hye might be aware of it, which is why I asked you for your help,” I replied.

- I honestly don’t understand what you’re saying.

“Anyway, just keep that in mind. Isn’t it already a known fact that we were able to drive out the Outer God through my sacrifice? This is the same thing. I know it’s questionable, but this action will lead to good results. I want to go down there as soon as possible, too,” I told her.

-…

“I’m really not lying. I want to go down as soon as possible. I mean, if we take it a bit slower, then we wouldn’t need to do this. Anyway, just consider what you're about to do as fulfilling my greed,” I added.

‘I need to hurry and take care of Hyun-Sung, Ha-Yan, Deok-Gu, and our children’s mental health.’

“I just created another card because I wanted to be more sure. My body will be useful. This is all according to plan, so don’t feel agitated or anxious. I’ll tell you the details when I return,” I said.

- I don’t plan on waiting and seeing what’s going to happen.

“Our conversation is going nowhere, so let’s stop talking about this issue for now,” I suggested.

‘If the Second Floor Boss decides to block the second floor, then it's going to be more difficult to clear the dungeon… ’

Of course, I didn't think that Jo Hye-Jin was doing something like that because she had her own role to play; I also had insurance in case of an emergency.

‘Clearing it was impossible in the first place.’

If something similar were to happen again, the monsters and boss monsters inside the dungeon would probably run out of the dungeon, resulting in a dungeon breakout.

Song Soo-Kyung had definitely reached the same conclusion. The first attempt was a failure, so he had to be more careful during his second attempt. He was probably waiting for the right opportunity since Ji-Hye noona wasn't the only one waiting for a war to break out.

'There were still flaws, though.'

- You'd better not look down on the Blue Guild. You better not think that they'd be able to take your corpse.

"No, just…"

- Everyone in Lindel, the Vatican, and the Sacred Democratic Country agreed to work together to protect your body. The guild master suggested it and is spearheading the campaign himself. He said he'd ask for help because Blue Guild might not be enough to protect your body. He said that if that happens again, we'll need help from others.

'He's asking for help?'

- It'll be impossible for anyone to take your corpse away. I don't know the identities of the intruders and their goals. I also don't know what kind of plan you're cooking here, but I suggest looking for another way. I'm sure you're already aware of this though…

"Amazing," Belial commented as I nodded in agreement.

I looked away and saw our lovely regressor talking to Oscar, Father Basel, and the key members of the Sacred Democratic Country. It was obvious why he was talking to them.

He was following the divine message I had sent to him after giving him the holy sword.

As expected, Kim Hyun-Sung looked nervous. He questioned whether he could really trust them and whether trusting people outside of the Blue Guild was the right thing to do, but he relieved that anxiety by grabbing his holy sword.

- He said everyone needed to join hands.

- Father Lee Ki-Young… I mean, the Son of Light, right?

- Yes, Father Basel. He said to have faith in humans and the remaining light inside of them. He said to receive help and give help; he also told me to find people who'd join hands with me to move forward together.

- I see.

- He said if I'm suffering, I should talk about it, and if I'm struggling, I should discuss it with everyone else. I'm not used to it, but I think it's going to be fine because he said that he'll always be with me. I'm not used to meetings like this, and I even feel uncomfortable about it, but I would like to ask all of you for a favor.

- Please lend me your power so that the Blue Guild, the Sacred Democratic Country, and I can protect Mr. Ki-Young.

- The Democratic Country will lend you our power, Mr. Hyun-Sung.

- The Vatican will do the same.

'This changes things.'

It was impossible to clear the Blue Dungeon, but they might be able to clear the Sacred Democratic Country dungeon. A group would expand as more and more people joined the group; it was a great thing, but…

'An opening is bound to appear… '

Villain Song was an idiot, but even he would know that there would be an opening that he could exploit.

CHAPTER 810
THE LAST (43)

'You're not that big of an idiot, right?'

I thought Song Soo-Kyung had found a way somehow. He was incompetent, but he wasn't a fool. If he were an idiot, he wouldn't have become a key member of the revamped Continental Protection Management Committee.

The continent was friendly to adventurers, but Song Soo-Kyung had reached heights that were incredibly difficult to reach from scratch.

He was politically aware and had even created his own force, so…

'I should admit it.'

I had to admit that he was actually competent.

If he weren't involved in the Kim Hyun-Sung issue, I could have used him at least once.

I could have hired him as a guild staffer, and if he were lucky, I could have given him a pretty decent position. He was so talented that I wanted to recruit him.

Of course, he couldn't replace me or start controlling Tactical Kim Hyun-Sung, but the way he was handling the ongoing changes throughout the continent was pretty good.

The Son of Light's death led the Blue Guild, who had been maintaining a closed-door policy, to open their doors.

The issue about how there were people targeting my corpse had been announced to the media, and Kim Hyun-Sung requested help from the Sacred Democratic Country and the Vatican.

Kim Hyun-Sung had also asked the large and big smalls in Lindel for help, and they

were in the middle of creating a group that would protect the Saint of Light.

Some areas in the continent were questioning whether the Sunset Swordsman was finally creating his own force, but the Blue Guild didn't care about that.

The mastermind behind the rangers that had invaded the guild and everyone else remained quiet at the movie that the Blue Guild had prepared for them.

'He's going around asking for support, so I'm sure he's desperate.'

Normally, Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't do something like that.

'Looks like my words were convincing.'

The sub guild master could truly influence the guild master's actions. I was sure this was a favorable situation for Song Soo-Kyung, who was making an excuse to contact the demon.

- Are you sure you cut them off?

- Yes, I made sure to take care of them, so you don't have to worry. We got rid of any evidence that is pointing at the Committee. I made sure that they won't find even the smallest connection. The group that had made the request doesn't exist, so we're not going to get caught.

- Good job.

'He's become a true demon. He doesn't feel even an ounce of guilt.'

- More importantly… the Sunset Swordsman…

- I heard that he'll be attending. He'll be here soon, so I think we should get ready.

- That's a relief. That's really good.

As expected, Song Soo-Kyung was already looking forward to it. It did feel like he was a step behind, but it didn't change the fact that he had made a move action; it was something that the Committee had to do as well.

'The timing is pretty good.'

The revamped Continental Protection Management Committee won't sit idly by on something the entire continent was interested in, and he was showing everyone that he wasn't incompetent through his actions.

The Committee immediately established a task force as soon as the Blue Guild had officially announced the incident. They also summoned named Adventurers as well as those who were particularly powerful using the strange phenomena that were happening all over the continent as an excuse.

Obviously, the Blue Guild was on the list. Kim Hyun-Sung had decided to become a sociable person, so he was on the list as well. Meanwhile, the Blue Guild didn't really have any choice but to accept the offer because they had a common goal.

Upon entering the building, Song Soo-Kyung went into his personal waiting room and fixed his outfit. He looked at himself in the mirror and nodded before speaking softly.

- I think things are going to work out.

"…"

- I never imagined that he'd actually come.

"You'll be able to get what you want," I told him.

- Yes, I must. I'll get it no matter what.

- It's time to go, Mr. Song Soo-Kyung.

- I'll be right out.

'His preparations are pretty great.'

I was kind of nervous, but he didn't overdo it.

It was a bit ordinary, but it was suitable to the current unstable atmosphere of the continent.

It wouldn't be enough for the higher-ups from the Kingdom of Others and the Republic, but it was only right to avoid anything that was excessively fancy. After all,

the public was watching as well, and the meeting wasn't for everyone to have fun in the first place.

The fact that the Sunset Swordsman would be present in the meeting had probably changed the nature of the meeting a lot.

I didn't like how Song Soo-Kyung smiled as he headed slowly toward the landing pad, but…

'Justice will be served, anyway.'

There was no need for me to be nervous.

Song Soo-Kyung looked up slowly.

As expected, I saw Kim Hyun-Sung driving the griffon himself.

'Pretty trustworthy, right?'

Kim Hyun-Sung looked pretty nervous as he landed on the Committee's landing pad with his black griffon that I hadn't seen in a while. I wasn't used to seeing that expression on his face.

'He's nervous because he knows that he needs to get through this with all his might.'

It was like he was saying, "I've been a lone wolf for the longest time, but now, I would like to talk to all of you myself."

He was announcing his intention to actively engage with the issues happening all over the continent. Of course, he wasn't used to something like this, as he had always made someone else handle something like this, even in his past life.

- Master of the Blue Guild, thank you for coming all this way. I'm Song Soo-Kyung of the revamped Continental Protection Management Committee.

- *Ah*, right. It's nice to see you again. Thank you very much for coming out to meet me.

- I'll guide you myself. This way.

- Okay.

- I heard the news, Sunset Swordsman.

- I see.

- I don’t know what to say…

-……

- I’m sure nothing I say will comfort you, but I hope you know that the revamped Continental Protection Management Committee will provide its full support. I’ve been thinking that perhaps there's a group behind the strange phenomena these days. However, my assumption might be different from the Blue Guild's assumption.

-…

- I felt that there was a need to look at an incident from a completely new perspective. The information that we have is limited, but we’re doing our best to understand the seriousness of the recent incident and resolve it.

-…

- I’ll tell you the details later. Let’s head inside.

- Okay.

It seemed that the two had forgotten about their shocking first meeting.

Actually, Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he didn't really remember Song Soo-Kyung.

However, he was trying to be friendly, so he had to have realized that Song Soo-Kyung was an important figure.

Miss Kim Mi-Young was here as his attendant, and she was whispering something to Kim Hyun-Sung. It was probably general information about Song Soo-Kyung.

‘She doesn’t really attend events like this… ’

However, Miss Kim Mi-Young's presence meant that the guild was aware of Kim

Hyun-Sung's new goal.

- I hope… you didn't have a hard time traveling all the way here.

- It was fine.

- Now that I think about it, I finally saw your griffon. It looks like it received a lot of love, and it looks very healthy based on its shiny feathers. It's also big compared to other griffons.

- I haven't been able to take care of it recently, but… yes, I do take care of it.

- *Ah!* I know this is a random question, but can you tell me how you tamed it? I'm actually really interested in griffons as well… I heard a griffon named Whitefall had laid an egg recently. I heard natural breeding was impossible, but many people in the academic field and related industries…

- We didn't do anything special… We just got along from the start.

'All… they're talking about… is the griffon.'

- How fast can it fly?

'That's all you guys are talking about.'

- I heard you enjoy riding from time to time. I enjoy it as well… I can't go flying now, but… once all of this is over, if we have time…

- If we get the chance, it would be great.

'And he fell for it… '

Kim Hyun-Sung probably thought that Song Soo-Kyung was just being nice, but I didn't think he needed to agree to go riding with the latter. However, he probably thought that there was no need to push Song Soo-Kyung away and decided to trust in the latter first rather than questioning the latter's intentions right away.

He couldn't ask the guilds of the Republic for help like what he had done with the guilds in Lindel, the Sacred Democratic Country, and the Vatican, so Kim Hyun-Sung was probably thinking of "what if" situations.

He seemed to be thinking that it wouldn't be great to ignore the one who had created a task force in response to the recent incident, so he decided to agree to Song Soo-Kyung's offer to go riding together.

The two talked as they headed toward the meeting room. Miss Kim Mi-Young and Song Soo-Kyung's attendants stood behind them; they walked quickly upon hearing the names of their bosses.

- Mr. Song Soo-Kyung of the revamped Continental Protection Management Committee and the Guild Master of the Blue Guild has arrived!

'He sure is annoying.'

I was sure he wanted to show the public an image of them walking together.

- Nice to meet you, Master of the Blue Guild.

- It's an honor to meet you, Hero of the Sunset.

- Looks like you've already met Mr. Song Soo-Kyung.

- Yes, I did.

- I heard about the unfortunate news, Mr. Kim Hyun-Sung.

-…

- Contact me anytime you need help. The Republic…

- It's nice to meet you.

Miss Kim Mi-Young whispered nonstop to Kim Hyun-Sung.

It was pretty rude, but everyone seemed to be pretty understanding; they also knew that Kim Hyun-Sung had no idea of their identities. In their eyes, Kim Hyun-Sung was nothing more than an experienced swordsman.

I couldn't help but think that this might be the side-effect of the fact that I was in charge of all guild affairs, including domestic and international.

‘I don’t see the guys who suffered during the Doom Hyun-Sung incident.’

They had to have decided to retire.

- Seeing you two together makes me think that the continent can overcome any threats.

-…

- Do you know, Mr. Kim Hyun-Sung?

- I’m sorry, but I don’t know what you’re talking about.

- Mr. Song Soo-Kyung is known as the embodiment of the Son of Light. Seeing you two together reminds me of the past.

-…

- The continent’s two new pillars have gathered.

- I wonder…

- I’m sure the Son of Light will be happy as well.

- Not only will he be happy, but I’m sure he feels very reassured. I know there was some misunderstanding, but it seems that you two have decided to join hands in the end.

- I’m sure you were surprised as well, Mr. Kim Hyun-Sung. Seeing him like this makes me think that the Son of Light had actually come back.

‘I’m not that happy.’

Kim Hyun-Sung's strange expression made me realize that they were stepping on land filled with mines. I became worried that something was going to happen, and that was when Song Soo-Kyung stepped up.

- Hey, that’s rude!

I knew this was necessary, but…

‘Why is he so annoying?’

- If you felt insulted, Mr. Kim Hyun-Sung, I'll apologize in their stead.

I felt upset seeing him talk to Kim Hyun-Sung with his demonic tongue.

‘This demonic bastard is really annoying. He's using wicked ways just to keep talking to him.’

CHAPTER 811
THE LAST (44)

'Who uses such an annoying method in this day and age?'

Naturally, I thought those people were hired by Song Soo-Kyung. Even if they weren't hired men, I was sure they had been waiting for this situation. This cheap, wicked method one would normally see in teen dramas was so ridiculous it made me laugh.

'You really think that will work?'

However, it seemed to be working, and it made sense because humans tend to take better care of those who were friendly to them.

In Kim Hyun-Sung's eyes, Song Soo-Kyung probably looked like someone who got mad for his sake. He probably thought that Song Soo-Kyung could help him out of difficult situations as well.

Song Soo-Kyung didn't do anything amazing, but it was undeniable that he had obtained brownie points for it.

Kim Hyun-Sung stared quietly at Villain Song, and he seemed to be feeling kind of grateful for the latter. Villain Song seemed to have finally understood Kim Hyun-Sung and had successfully impressed the latter.

'He's a pretty good actor.'

- It may sound rude to those who honor the Son of Light, and I don't even have to say that the Sunset Swordsman is one of them. I'm very honored and grateful to hear that, but I'm afraid it'll damage his reputation.

'Him… The late Father Lee Ki-Young is now simply referred to as him.'

- He's the saint who had sacrificed everything for the continent. No one will be able to replace the Saint of Light. I know you're complimenting me to make me happy, and I'm sorry that I took it seriously, but… I ask that you refrain from saying things like

that… at least when the Guild Master of the Blue Guild is here.

'No one will be able to replace the Saint of Light?'

- I apologize again, Mr. Kim Hyun-Sung.

- It's fine.

- We apologize as well, Sunset Swordsman.

- We didn't consider how you would feel. We'd like to formally apologize.

The blame suddenly landed on the extras.

Kim Hyun-Sung almost exploded in fury, but the sudden change in the situation made him feel awkward. The situation was just too strange like it was scripted.

Kim Hyun-Sung was about to express his dissatisfaction, and that was when Villain Song stepped up. Kim Hyun-Sung might be thinking that it was a good thing that Villain Song had stepped up.

As expected, Miss Kim Mi-Young looked more relieved than Kim Hyun-Sung. Miss Kim Mi-Young was also hoping that nothing bad would happen here; regardless of who was at fault, she didn't want people to make any rumors about this encounter.

'It's not like the extras have made a huge mistake.'

If Kim Hyun-Sung ended up getting angry and messed things up, rumors would definitely spread like wildfire.

They'd obviously say things like, "The Sunset Swordsman went crazy because he couldn't overcome his sadness," and "He can no longer make reasonable decisions after losing Father Lee Ki-Young."

Unfortunately, rumors along those lines had already spread, but there was no need to bolster those rumors.

-…

Kim Hyun-Sung remained quiet. The extras left cleared their throats and left the

room.

Villain Song sighed and spoke.

- I hope you don’t resent or hate them too much, Mr. Kim Hyun-Sung.

-…

- It’s not because they've forgotten Father Lee Ki-Young.

- If they…

- Yes?

- If they haven't forgotten about him, how could they say such…

- What?

- No… it’s nothing.

- I understand that you’re angry. But… But… that's definitely not the case. There’s no way the continent would forget him when he had sacrificed himself for the continent and had given his all even in the smallest of things. T-They're just… afraid.

- Afraid of what?

- Everything. They’re afraid of living on this continent.

-…

- They’re afraid of living on this continent without Father Lee Ki-Young. They’re not the only ones who are afraid. Those with power, and even the adventurers are afraid.

- However, the ordinary people living on this continent are probably more afraid than them. I can't even imagine just how frightened they are with what has been happening recently. It hasn’t even been a year since that big war ended, and we still remember that day.

Song Soo-Kyung drank from his cup before continuing.

- They're probably thinking that they’re safe and that they’re under the light's protection However, they still want to fill in the empty spot that the Saint of Light had left no matter what.

Song Soo-Kyung was smiling bitterly by himself, and I had to say that it was great acting.

- Even after death…

- He was the spiritual leader of the continent. I’m scared as well. I know I shouldn’t keep relying on the Saint of Light, but I keep relying on him. I find myself pathetic for doing it. For ordinary people like me, moving out of his arms is—

- Are you saying that they’re forcing him to sacrifice himself even after his death?

-…

-…

‘I didn’t expect him to interpret it that way.’

Song Soo-Kyung flinched, and he looked like he wasn’t sure of the right answer. The build-up of this conversation was great, but he seemed to have been caught off guard by the unexpected subplot.

Kim Hyun-Sung had interpreted his words in a completely different way, and I was sure that he was surprised by it.

- I’m sorry to say this, but… everyone is relying on him as they live.

- *Ha… ha…*

- T-T-They don’t want to believe it.

-…

- I’m sure they didn’t want to believe it. How could they accept the fact that he has left our side temporarily? Can you accept it?

Kim Hyun-Sung reacted by shaking his head slowly.

- They've been exaggerating those rumors, hoping to get rid of their anxiety by pretending like someone else can fill the void he had left. Those without power have spread false rumors, saying that Father Lee Ki-Young has returned through the incarnation of the Saint of Light.

- I also don't think the nicknames that they gave me are appropriate. I'm actually embarrassed. Who would dare take his spot?

- I see.

- B-But…

'This bastard… '

- I don't deny the rumors of the powerless. At least, when I'm in front of the public, I don't deny nor do I get swayed.

'He has a point.'

- I want to become their shelter, and I want to create a continent where those people can feel safe. I want the powerless to live in peace. I know better than anyone that no one can replace the Son of Light, but… I want to do it for the powerless.

His endless lies were making me retch, but…

'It's not bad.'

There was no way he was aware of the wrath that Kim Hyun-Sung was capable of unleashing. Otherwise, he wouldn't have dared to do something like this.

'There's no way.'

I was the only one who was aware of the fact that Kim Hyun-Sung had a traumatic experience related to carrying the burdens of the continent.

Song Soo-Kyung probably wanted to come up with an excuse for his nicknames, but I was sure that he appeared like someone capable of carrying the burdens in Kim Hyun-Sung's eyes.

Kim Hyun-Sung was probably thinking of me, who had sacrificed everything for the

continent. No one was forcing Song Soo-Kyung to do it, but he said that he was willing to sacrifice himself for the continent as well, so it was only natural that Kim Hyun-Sung would think of me.

Of course, I couldn't imagine Kim Hyun-Sung seeing me in someone else, but Song Soo-Kyung's words managed to make him put his guard down a bit.

'Is this working out?'

This process was necessary to steal the Son of Light's eye and heart, but a part of me felt nervous.

'Kim Hyun-Sung, I hope he doesn't lose himself and start telling him not to sacrifice himself. What if he starts pitying Song Soo-Kyung and becomes even closer to him after seeing me in him? What if he says that Song Soo-Kyung reminds him of me and says that he can't let Song Soo-Kyung experience the same pain that I had experienced?

'Shit, what if that ends up happening?'

Once Song Soo-Kyung executed his plan and stole my eye and heart, Kim Hyun-Sung might find out that everything was a lie.

Fortunately, I was the one who had raised him with great care, so I was sure that he wasn't going to make Song Soo-Kyung his new best friend.

'That kind of storyline doesn't make sense… '

Kim Hyun-Sung had a conscience, so there was no way he'd think of something like that.

Anyway, Kim Hyun-Sung looked nervous, nodding quietly while listening to Song Soo-Kyung.

It was possible that he actively stopped thinking because he didn't want me to find out his thoughts. I was frustrated because I couldn't read his mind properly.

Song Soo-Kyung also looked nervous when he noticed just how quiet Kim Hyun-Sung was at the moment. He seemed annoyed as well because he had no idea whether he had gotten the right answer or not.

Kim Hyun-Sung nodded and sat down quietly.

Villain Song awkwardly led the meeting. He had prepared many options depending on the result of his plan, but it seemed like he had proceeded with the plan under the assumption that his plan had ended up working.

He provided investigative reports about the attempted body snatching case, the black market, and the strange phenomena throughout the continent, earning a nod from Kim Hyun-Sung. They were all fabricated, but they were pretty convincing.

Song Soo-Kyung soon started talking about the manual that they would follow when something actually happened; he even had a presentation about the position of the heroes on the Committee.

'Moreover... '

- There's only going to be one control tower responsible for field command.

- That's…

Song Soo-Kyung was showing off his abilities.

However, it seemed like he was thinking that it was too early for him to reveal that he could execute a one-man tactic, but he decided to tell Kim Hyun-Sung that he could control the battlefield.

If it weren't for his confidence, tactical ability, and everyone's trust in him, he wouldn't been able to say such things.

- If it's you…

- Yes, I'm sure it'll be possible.

Song Soo-Kyung seemed to be worried about whether it was even possible in the first place. After all, Kim Hyun-Sung was unaware of the fact that he had become a demon.

Fortunately, Kim Hyun-Sung had agreed, so he decided to observe for now.

Actually, Kim Hyun-Sung looked kind of happy, but I wasn't sure why.

‘Why do you look so happy?’

'Is this bastard going to abandon me? What if he thinks that he has found someone competent… '

I couldn’t help but feel disappointed when Kim Hyun-Sung visited Song Soo-Kyung privately after the meeting.

- I wanted to tell you that I have high expectations.

- T-Thank you, Mr. Kim Hyun-Sung. I’m honored.

‘Bastard. You traitor. You scum.’

However, a thought popped into Kim Hyun-Sung’s head, and I couldn’t help but feel kind of disappointed.

- Please do your best… so that you can fill in Mr. Ki-Young’s role.

Kim Hyun-Sung's lips were curled up in a strange way, making him look strange.

- I’m counting on you.

The twisted thought that briefly popped into his head was delivered to my mind.

- Please do your best.

I was so shocked that I had no idea what to say.

“What’s wrong, Hyun-Sung…” I mumbled.

The nice Kim Hyun-Sung… was trying to turn Song Soo-Kyung into a sacrificial lamb that would bear the burden of the continent on behalf of the Saint of Light, who would eventually return to the continent.

‘What the hell is wrong with you? It hasn't been that long since I told you to trust humans… ’

Kim Hyun-Sung had chosen Song Soo-Kyung.

CHAPTER 812
THE LAST (45)

'Seeing things like that reminds me of the past.'

When our tutorial party officially took control of the Blue Guild—well, it was more like right after Kim Hyun-Sung was appointed as the guild master. Anyway, I really had a hard time back then, as I was overworking myself. I worked so hard that I even got worried about dying from exhaustion.

It was the time when I had to take care of all the tasks within the guild and focus on my growth as an alchemist as well. Of course, I also had to take care of Kim Hyun-Sung and take care of Ha-Yan's mental state; Ha-Yan was like a time bomb at the time.

'I couldn't even get enough sleep.'

I wanted to show that I was useful somehow, so I did my best. As a result, Kim Hyun-Sung gave me a ton of work. It was to the point that I couldn't even remember how many official positions I had. I had no time for myself, and I couldn't get enough sleep.

'He did *go a bit overboard.'*

I was sure something serious would have happened if a problem had occurred at the time. Now that I thought about it, Kim Hyun-Sung's actions weren't strange at all. After all, the regressor was quite cold-hearted in the beginning.

I thought I had melted his frozen heart completely, but it seemed that his heart was still partly frozen. Of course, it could also be an aftereffect of Doom Hyun-Sung. I knew he had become a bit more reasonable these days, but I felt a shiver down my spine seeing him pass the burdens to Villain Song.

'I didn't even think about that.'

Even Satan would applaud him, and I was sure of that.

Regardless of what he was thinking and how he was acting, it was an undeniable fact that his actions would bring me good results. The fact that Kim Hyun-Sung had thought about doing that meant he was giving Song Soo-Kyung a lot of authority.

As expected, Villain Song was smiling like a clown.

'You must be happy.'

He was definitely thinking that he had been recognized by Kim Hyun-Sung. His plan had worked perfectly, and he ended up on Kim Hyun-Sung's side. It was understandable that he'd make that kind of face, as he had heard many comments that gave him strength.

Villain Song looked as if he was trying to hold back his laughter.

- *Ha… haha… hahahaha!*

After entering his room by himself, he immediately laughed like a maniac.

- *Hahahahaha!*

Yeah, laugh all you want.

- Were you watching?

'Yeah, I was.'

"I can see and feel everything," I replied.

- The Guild Master of the Blue Guild has asked me to take Father Lee Ki-Young's place.

'I don't think that's what he said. I'm sure he was telling you to take care of my tasks.'

- He said that he was counting on me and asked me to do my best.

"I told you. Everything you want will be fulfilled," I said.

- When he said he was counting on me, my heart was filled with so much joy that you wouldn't be able to understand it even if I described it to you.

“It’s not over yet, mortal,” I said.

- What do you mean?

“Even if you've gained the God of Sunset's favor, it doesn't mean that you’re already connected to him. Regardless of what the God of Sunset thinks of you, you still won’t be able to replace the Son of Light,” I answered.

-…

Song Soo-Kyung’s expression changed. He displayed a wicked look that reminded me of a typical villain who'd appear in stories or a concubine being jealous of the queen.

-…

“His eye and heart will complete you,” I told him.

- Yes, you did say I needed his eye and heart. His eye and heart… I can move a step forward if I have those. A way… for me to become complete…

“That’s right. That method will make you complete, and you can get whatever you want by then,” I said.

- I just have to get those… I just have to get those…

He seemed nervous.

‘I did ruin one person’s life.’

- That’s all I need… Everything else is ready.

‘You’ve truly become a true demon, Song Soo-Kyung.’

Villain Song wasn’t in his right mind, to begin with, but…

“His behavior is just natural,” Belial commented.

“Is that right, Belial?” I asked.

“Humans are inherently weak mentally. They’re swayed by the smallest thing, and

the most trivial comment and behavior changes them. It's also hard for them to recognize that they've changed and once they've realized it, it's already too late," Belial explained.

"You're talking as if it has nothing to do with his contract with a demon," I said.

"I won't deny the fact that it has something to do with that. We enjoy those disgusting emotions from humans. We provide an environment where they can change, and we guide them toward that change. You could say that it's a form of entertainment amidst this mundane, endless life of ours. It should be the same for you," Belial explained.

'I mean… it's not really like that… for me.'

It was entertaining, but it wasn't entertaining every time.

"There are those who don't change, of course. The woman you call your soulmate is like that, but it's because she's numb. She's numb to any changes; she doesn't feel any guilt in her emotions or thoughts.

"There are people like her, and they comfort themselves by saying that it's okay or they are enjoying the moment. People like her don't change, but ordinary humans tend to be prey, not the predator.

"They'll eventually get buried in negative emotions. In the end, they'll get consumed by darkness to the point that they can never get out of it," Belial added.

'That reminds me of Hyun-Sung's unique habit.'

"…"

"It's the task of the contractor to decide how they'll control that change, but it looks like he had chosen to accept it. *Haha.* He must be thinking that the decision he has made is better than feeling inferior forever and believes he's going to get rewarded for his decision. He feels satisfied, so I guess he feels happy," Belial added.

"I gave him hope, so I'm sure he's happy," I commented.

"You're right. It's reasonable… *Haha*… So…" Belial trailed off.

“Yes?”

“You’re not done yet. The stage and the actors are ready…” Belial pointed out.

‘He really doesn’t like waiting.’

Belial was like a child who couldn’t wait to open his present, but…

“We’re not the ones who'll pull the trigger,” I told him.

As always, we wouldn't start it ourselves. In my plan, someone else would throw the dice.

“Just as I thought,” Belial said.

“Noona will pull the trigger first,” I said.

It was reasonable, and I was sure Villain Song was thinking about the same thing.

Stealing my corpse was impossible under normal circumstances. The Blue Guild had expanded greatly and had become the Sacred Democratic Country's dungeon.

Even if he dispatched his strongest men to this dungeon, it wouldn't be easy to defeat the final boss and the hidden boss; I was sure he knew that fact. He had already failed once, so he had to be wiser for his second attempt.

At least, he needed a reason to lure out Kim Hyun-Sung and Jung Ha-Yan.

‘It would be best if noona did something.’

I wasn't talking about the strange phenomena happening all over the continent.

Something really big needed to happen. Perhaps…

“I think we’re almost there,” I told him.

“*Hm…*”

“I think she’ll pull the trigger soon. I’m excited to see what she has prepared,” I said.

Lee Ji-Hye had declared that she would destroy the continent, so she had definitely prepared something impactful. Actually, if she really were planning on destroying the continent, she had to have prepared thoroughly for it. She'd probably do something that would throw the entire continent into chaos.

Of course, I wasn't saying that the destruction of the World Tree and the things happening on the continent at the moment weren't a big deal, but if Ji-Hye noona…

'…pulls something, it'll be scary.'

It would be scarier if she was under Lucifer's support.

I was sure she'd create the situation that I wanted to see, but I didn't think it'd happen right away…

I stared in astonishment at the sudden change in the continent, and I couldn't help but unconsciously mutter, "She doesn't play fair either…"

- Mr. Song Soo-Kyung!

-…

- Mr. Song Soo-Kyung!

- Yes?

- Y-You should… come outside right now!

-…

- It's urgent. Something happened… outside, but I don't know how to explain it…

"What the…"

- Right now…

"What is it…"

"How absurd…" Belial mumbled. He was definitely thinking that whatever was happening in the real world right now was *really* unrealistic. If even Belial—who was

a transcendental being—felt that the sight was unrealistic, I couldn't imagine what the people down there were thinking at the moment.

Song Soo-Kyung ran outside and saw that everyone was staring blankly at the sky with dejected faces.

- O God… what… is going on…

The denizens were screaming, and they were staring at the sky in fear.

- Where's the Sunset Swordsman?

- Where's the sunset hero?! O Goddess Benigoa. Son of Light. Please… please save the continent!

- This is crazy… absolutely crazy.

- O Elune… *Ha… haha…*

"I didn't think that this was possible… Actually, it is possible with their power, but… I really want to applaud them for their creative thinking. More importantly, I didn't think the system would allow this…" Belial muttered.

"I think it's creative as well. It's… really absurd…" I commented.

The sky had been engulfed by darkness—no, it wasn't just the sky. The entire continent was plunged into darkness.

Kim Hyun-Sung took to the sky in response to the sudden change.

I didn't know what was happening, but he definitely thought that he needed to resist the darkness that was engulfing the continent because he took out his sword and unleashed the sunset.

A radiant red light filled the world in an instant, and his mana pierced the darkness hanging overhead, but *that* darkness wasn't something one could get rid of using physical force.

'He realized that it's not working.'

Kim Hyun-Sung was surprised that our sunset wasn't working against that darkness.

"That's the system…" I mumbled.

"…"

"It's really shocking. Is that even possible?" I questioned.

"You're seeing it with your own eyes right now, so it's definitely possible. Otherwise, it wouldn't be happening right now. The system… must've thought it was reasonable," Belial replied.

Once the mysterious darkness enveloped the continent completely, I heard a familiar voice, and it was a voice I expected to hear.

[Mythic-rank dungeon, "The Continent Where the Son of Light Was Sacrificed" has been created forcefully.]

[Everyone has entered the dungeon.]

[A Mythic-rank Forced Quest will be given to everyone.]

[Revealing the conditions for the dungeon clear.]

[The End of All Life (0/1)]

[Or…]

[The Revival of the Son of Light (0/1)]

"Lee Ji-Hye," I said.

[The decision is yours.]

"Her plan is really huge…" I commented.

[Got it?]

CHAPTER 813
THE LAST (46)

- Sub Guild Master! Sub Guild Master?

“I’m checking as well. I’ll let you know once I’ve figured out what's going on,” I answered.

- Is Miss Ji-Hye behind this?

“Wait, wait. Things are pretty hectic up here as well. Ji-Hye noona is probably behind this, but I’ll tell you the details later,” I answered.

What the hell?

- Mr. Ki-Young… Mr. Ki-Young.

“…”

- Mr. Ki-Young!

“Stay in your place, Sunset Swordsman. I believe you’ll be able to overcome this crisis,” I ordered.

Kim Hyun-Sung was surprised, but the only thing he could do was listen.

- Prepare for battle! Prepare for battle! The monsters are coming in waves. Shit!

- Protect Castlerock! Don’t back down!

- It’s over if the front line collapses! The civilians will be affected, too.

‘Shit, I think it’s going to collapse.’

- It’s the end. It’s the end… The goddess of light was angry. I’m sure she's decided to bring judgement upon us, humans! *Ha… hahahahahahaha!*

- Get a grip, you fool! Do you wanna die?!

- Everyone will die, damn it! Everyone will die! We're paying the price! We're paying the price for living on the continent where the son of light was sacrificed! Everyone will die. All of us are going to die!

- Crazy bastard! You've gone completely mad! Shit! Jericho! Take this bastard inside!

- I'm sure the goddess of light is angry because we've sacrificed the son that she had sent over to us. O Goddess Benigoa! Please forgive us. Please take pity on us foolish mortals and give us one more chance! O Goddess Benigoa! Please answer me!

- Stop them! Stop them! Damn it! Request reinforcements! What the hell is the Continental Protection Management Committee doing?!

What do you think?

- How did this happen? Is this… Is this actually happening? Did… Did God really abandon us?

They were obviously having a meeting about this.

- What did it mean by "the end of all life" and "the revival of the Son of Light… Why did the entire continent turn into a dungeon? Is there really no one that can explain this crazy situation? What did… the Order of Benigoa and the Vatican say about this?

- They haven't made any official announcements, but it seems like they're thinking that this is actually the will of Goddess Benigoa.

- If it's her will… does that mean they're going to accept this situation… Can they really accept this situation? It said the end of all life! Are they only going to be satisfied once the continent has collapsed?

- We can also bring back the Son of Light.

- If that's actually possible, I'm sure Goddess Benigoa wouldn't have decided to bring judgement upon us. She would have brought him back herself. This is judgement. It's punishment for arrogant people who only care about themselves. The revival of the Saint of Light is impossible to begin with! The goddess of light just wants… the humans living on this content to realize their sins and destroy themselves.

- You’re going too far with that interpretation. She—We…

- Think about what's going on these days! I don’t know who those crazy bastards are, but… they were targeting the Son of Light’s body! Do you really think that the goddess wouldn’t be angry with that?! What kind of parent would allow their son’s body to be sold in the black market and be tainted? It’s not strange that she’s angry. She really did abandon the continent.

-…

- Don’t you think the goddess would calm down a little if we brought those crazy bastards before her statue?

- You’re right. We must calm her down using the blood of the lunatics who dared to target his body!

- We don’t even know where they are!

- No, there may be a way to bring back the Son of Light.

- Stop it with the nonsense!

- We should at least try! We should ask the Blue Guild and the Vatican for help. If we gather the mages, priests, or adventurers with special powers on the continent, we may be able to get a small hint. Let’s contact them for now. We can officially announce…

- There’s no time for that! We must use the Continental Protection Management Committee's name to bring his body here!

They were all panicking. Of course, it wasn't strange, as even I was surprised by the sudden turn of events. The entire continent had become a dungeon with the undead and a variety of monsters running around.

Many people interpreted the change in their own different ways, and the timing wasn't bad as well.

In addition…

‘It feels like everything is falling into place.’

In their eyes, the theory that my corpse was somehow connected to this change was a convincing story. As always, Song Soo-Kyung calmed them down.

- Stop! Stop it all of you! We can take our time coming up with a way to handle this, but we have to protect the civilians as soon as possible! Their protection is our top priority.

- The entire continent is under siege by monsters. The people in the small cities must be moved to the major cities and the castle gates have to be closed. What we do afterward is important as well, but we must minimize the damage for now.

-…

- An unexpected situation has occurred, but we can handle it. I'll adjust the continental alert level to the highest disaster level. Prepare your troops. This is war.

Things were chaotic down there, but it was chaotic up here as well.

"Lee Ki-Young! Lee Ki-Young!" Benigoa called out with a surprised look. The emotions surging within Belial and I were nothing compared to her tumultuous emotions. "What should we do? What can we do? It became a dungeon! It became a dungeon, right?"

Someone else was with Benigoa, and she was a shorter goddess.

'She must be Lauren.'

"It's just as you see it. I didn't think this was possible, but… *Ah!* You're here as well, Lauren," I greeted.

"It's been a while, human," Lauren said.

"Lauren! How dare you speak to him that way! I told you to speak to him with respect!" Benigoa scolded her.

"O-Okay, unni. I mean, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. It's been a while. And… I also see a dirty demon that I don't even want to see," Lauren said.

"I'm happy to see you again, Lauren," Belial greeted.

“Stay back, unni,” Lauren said to Benigoa.

“Lauren! What are you doing?!” Benigoa shouted.

“We need to protect ourselves at least. Solving this issue is the top priority, but I can’t allow you to breathe the same air as that demon. The air here is dirty. You never know when that disgusting hand of his might threaten you…” Lauren explained.

“That’s mean. I've been living a clean life, and I'm pretty proud of that, you know?" Belial remarked.

“Lauren! Put your weapon away,” Benigoa ordered.

Lauren was wielding a large halberd, but she was so petite that I couldn’t imagine her using that weapon. However, Lauren looked pretty skilled at the weapon, unlike Benigoa with her sword and shield.

Belial didn’t seem threatened, but he seemed kind of annoyed. He knew that Lauren wouldn't back down no matter what he said, so he turned toward me, asking for my intervention.

“W-We’re on the same side now! Belial is on the same side, too! I know he’s a dirty demon that we shouldn’t associate ourselves with, but he’s still on our side!” Benigoa yelled.

“Unni, you honestly don’t trust this guy, do you?” Lauren questioned.

“Laureeeeeeeeen! Laureeeeen! Did you not hear what I just said?” Benigoa exclaimed.

“It’s fine, Benigoa,” I said.

“Lee Ki-Young! Don’t fall for it! I told her so many times… I need to teach her a lesson,” she said.

“You don’t need to be so angry, Benigoa. I completely understand how Lauren is feeling, so don’t worry. I’m sure she can't get used to this right away. Close-minded people will never understand why we're working with a demon lord. *Ah!* You can keep your weapon as long as you don’t use it,” I told Lauren.

“You hear that, unni?” Lauren said.

“I heard you'd be joining us… So this is how we meet again. If I knew you were coming, I would’ve prepared something…” I said.

“No, it’s fine, hu… I mean, Lee Ki-Young. The situation *is* bad right now. So…”

“The continent has become a dungeon,” I informed.

“I know, and I already know that the monsters and the undead are heading over to the cities. You think I wouldn’t notice when I have eyes? We’re in chaos, too. We’ve never heard or even imagined that something like this could happen. Basically, the situation is bad,” Lauren explained.

“Do we have a way to take care of this?” I asked.

“All we can do is wait for the continent to return to its original state. It’s something the system has allowed… As always, we have no choice but to let the humans decide the continent's fate. The problem is that this is no ordinary dungeon, so this is really a unique situation,” Lauren replied.

“…”

“You know that dungeons are basically independent spaces that are completely isolated from the outside, right? To be exact—”

“No, you don’t have to explain. The problem… may become more serious than I thought,” I interrupted Lauren.

Lauren nodded quietly.

‘Things are going to get chaotic.’

I finally understood why she had decided to destroy the World Tree first. The World Tree was a natural treasure capable of dispensing infinite resources, after all, and most importantly, it was a gift from the gods.

‘Things are going to get really *crazy.’*

The humans were busy stopping the monster wave at the moment, but the fact that

the continent had become a dungeon was a more serious problem than I thought. Both the sky and the ocean were covered in darkness, and the humans had lost the place where they could get light and resources. The first issue that I noticed was definitely…

'Resources.'

"There will be no more new gifts of the gods on the continent. It's highly likely it will remain that way until they've cleared the dungeon. This will be a serious problem for humans. I want to have faith in them, but…" I trailed off.

"A war might break out," Belial said.

"That's right. The continent has already fallen into chaos, and if this phenomenon lasts for a long time, the humans will…" I trailed off again.

"…"

"…die from starvation," I said.

"…"

"She's so evil. I knew she had a disgusting soul, but I didn't think that her soul was *this* disgusting. All she wants to do is watch the humans down there create hell on earth! We shouldn't let humans like her come up here, unni," Lauren complained.

I wasn't sure if she could say the same thing once Ji-Hye noona became her boss, but she had to be really anxious based on her negative comments.

It was proof that the situation up there was *that* bad.

'She did go overboard.'

I knew Ji-Hye noona was going to cause trouble, but… Lauren's remark was possible as well. She might be thinking of mourning my death by making people gather and kill each other.

'Noona, you do know that I'm alive, right?'

There was no way she wouldn't know that I was alive.

I was sure she had created a hypothesis in her head, but she had probably made several contingency plans as well, as she wasn't really sure of my status. Anyway, she was building up to the downfall of the continent in case her hypothesis was disproven. I was convinced that it was the only thing she was worried about.

Of course, there was a high chance that I was just jumping to conclusions about that.

"Kim Hyun-Sung," I mumbled.

As I expected, I saw Kim Hyun-Sung looking up at the dark dungeon with a smirk.

CHAPTER 814
THE LAST (47)

- Did you hear? Oppa has to be revived in order for us to clear the dungeon. S-Sora, we'll be able to see the sky again once we do that!

- Wow! That's… a relief!

- The system must've thought that a world without O-O-Oppa is meaningless and it deserves to get destroyed. That's why the continent has changed so much.

'When did you… '

- T-That's probably why it gave us a choice. I-I think everyone will cooperate. Although I-I don't think these idiots will get anything done, but… s-still, their lives are on the line. I-It'll be funny if everyone dies, don't you agree?

- *Ah*… yes.

- You won't die, so don't worry, Sora.

- Thank you, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. More importantly, are you… okay right now?

- *Huh*?

- Your mana.

- I-It doesn't matter. M-My recovery rate is really fast… You'll have the same recovery rate as me soon.

Jung Ha-Yan quietly closed her book and looked out the window.

- I-I-It's pretty, right?

Han Sora nodded quietly in response.

There were constant bursts of light and explosions in the night sky.

The monsters and the undead roared as they banged on the gates of Lindel, but Jung Ha-Yan's face didn't change at all. Even Han Sora was at a loss for words when she saw Jung Ha-Yan maintaining the same face while reading an advanced-level magic book she couldn't understand. Han Sora looked at her with respect and fear.

- The people at the Magic Tower are praying, right?

- Yes… they're probably praying right now. *Ah!* Now that I think about it, they said they were going to hold a meeting soon… Should I tell them that you're busy recovering your mana?

- Who's coming?

- The guild master and Mr. Park Deok-Gu will be there.

- T-Then let's go.

- Okay, I'll get ready.

- *Ah!* Wait, Sora. S-Something big appeared…

A giant lightning bolt fell from the sky, frying a giant monster. The sight made me think that perhaps the God of Magic truly existed, and they were Jung Ha-Yan.

- I-It was a direct hit. Let's go.

- Okay.

'I'm sure everyone is the same.'

Obviously, all guilds and groups were probably going to attend the meeting. Their behavior was bound to change because the environment had changed. One could say that this incident was changing the environment, so I was sure all groups were on high alert. This was especially true for the Blue Guild, which was deeply related to this incident.

However, I was worried that the meeting was going to turn out in a different way than what I had expected.

‘Damn it… ’

I was worried about Kim Hyun-Sung's thoughts. I was sure he knew why they were given two choices to clear this dungeon, and he knew the connection between the revival of the Saint of Light and the End of All Life.

‘It seems like you’re trying to hide it, which makes me even more worried.’

The theory was that the continent where the Son of Light was sacrificed had become a dungeon created for the Son of Light—Lee Ki-Young. The chances were low, but if he believed that the choice to end all life would start the third life, then this would be a serious problem.

Telling him to get rid of the darkness because I wanted to see the sunset would work, but it was only going to work a few times. Right now, he was passionate about protecting the continent because of the sword I had bestowed upon him, but once he believed that there was no hope, he'd most likely pick the first option.

There was no guarantee that the End of All Life would kickstart the third life, but I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung was hoping that something like that would happen.

In other words, Brigade Hyun-Sung, who appeared in my dream, could be born.

‘No way, no way.’

Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't be able to forgive himself by then. If our regressor had to annihilate mankind to start the third life, I was sure he'd not be able to withstand restarting from scratch once again.

‘No, let’s not think about this for now.’

On the outside, he looked like he wasn’t taking this incident seriously.

If someone else were to ask me about what I thought, I'd say that Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he didn’t care at all. Honestly, it wasn’t just him. Jung Ha-Yan, even Park Deok-Gu, and all the guild members seemed to be thinking that things had worked out for the better.

- Noonim! Sit here. Your lightning bolt is still falling outside. Is it okay for you to keep doing that? You're really helping the soldiers defending the gate… *Ah*, the soldiers

over there asked me to thank you.

- A-About… the God of Magic…

- I actually talked about you. I told them I would visit the basement of the Magic Tower.

Park Deok-Gu had to have come from the battlefield because he was covered in blood as he talked to Jung Ha-Yan. He seemed happy about seeing her for the first time in a while. Actually, perhaps he was happy for a different reason.

- I feel like there's some hope. Dungeons are normally created so that they can be cleared. If hyung-nim's revival is the condition for clearing the dungeon, then I'm sure there's a way to save him. It means everything that you, the bro, and our guild have been doing hasn't been in vain. I'm sure hyung-nim will come back.

- I also think… that it's good that it turned out this way. We've been getting official documents. After the incident today. Asking if they can see. Mister Lee Ki-Young's body. They wanted to look for a way together. That there may be another way.

-…

- Up until now. They weren't. Interested. They have no right. To meddle in our business. It's annoying. They looked at us as if we were a bunch of lunatics… They said Hyun-Sung oppa had to overcome his death. That's what they've been saying… but look now. Look at how pitiful they've become. Now that their safety is on the line.

- *Haha… ha.* I understand how they feel, but… don't hate them too much. They're doing this because they're scared.

- I can say the same for you, Mister Ki-Mo. You're too kind. They ask Ha-Yan unni and Hyun-Sung oppa for help only when they need their help. They ignore and treat them poorly when they don't need them. Thinking about it again, I think it's good that things have turned out this way since they'll need our help now.

- *Kgh…* You didn't need to say all of that…

- I know you agree as well, Mister Deok-Gu.

'I need to educate her as well.'

Kim Ye-Ri's manner of speech still hadn't changed, but I understood what she was trying to say. However, her ideas and thoughts were just too extreme. I wasn't saying that she was wrong, but I couldn't say that she was mentally stable either.

Yoo Ah-Young finally spoke.

- H-Honestly, I agree with Miss Kim Ye-Ri. There are many rude people around us. Many people think that it's the guild master's job to protect people. It's like they expect that from him.

- Heroes usually receive that kind of treatment.

- But Chang-Ryeol…

- I don't… necessarily agree with it either.

-…

Once the atmosphere became kind of serious, Hwang Jung-Yeon smiled.

- The mood has gotten kind of serious. I know things outside aren't looking great, but we should still smile at times like this. Mr. Deok-Gu is right; the entity behind this dungeon is basically saying that the sub guild master *can* be resurrected. It's fine to express your opinion, but taking it personally isn't good for the mission… Everyone knows that, right?

-…

- I'm sure Miss Kim Mi-Young, the guild master, and Miss Hye-Jin are working together, thinking about the direction the guild should move in for the sake of the future. How about we wait while telling each other fun stories?

Alps was the youngest member of the guild, so she could only stare at everyone talking about exciting things.

- By the way, has anyone heard from Elena noonim after the incident?

- I think she's actually trying to find a place to stay. I'm sure it's hard for her.

Jung Ha-Yan wasn't participating in the conversation, but she didn't seem to mind the

mood of the guild because it had been a while since the guild was *this* noisy. She was sitting next to Han Sora and would make comments here and there; she even said that she would bring the elves to Lindel herself.

Kim Hyun-Sung, Jo Hye-Jin, and Miss Kim Mi-Young appeared moments later. Kim Hyun-Sung and Jo Hye-Jin sat down while Miss Kim Mi-Young got ready for the briefing.

Jung Ha-Yan glanced at my empty seat, and the sight kind of broke my heart.

Obviously, it was still empty, and I was sure she'd be really disappointed if someone were to take my spot. The atmosphere became heavy upon the arrival of Kim Hyun-Sung, Jo Hye-Jin, and Miss Kim Mi-Young.

Fortunately, Miss Kim Mi-Young soon started talking.

- I'm sure you already expected this, but the Blue Guild's top priority is clearing the Mythic-rank dungeon, The Continent Where the Son of Light Was Sacrificed. There's no task that takes priority over that.

-…

- We must focus on protecting the continent until we've gathered detailed information about how to clear the dungeon.

- You mean the monster wave?

- Including but not limited to the monster wave. The Sacred Democratic Country is the farthest we'll go to protect the continent, and we'll stick to Lindel and the Blue Guild.

- What do you mean?

- It's highly likely that a war will break out.

-…

- There's a high chance that other cities and nations are thinking of the same thing as us.

- So…

- We believe that the entire continent will experience a famine in a few months. The smaller cities with poor infrastructure will run out of supplies in just a month. The larger cities will last longer, but they'll eventually run out of supplies as well. We believe that the Federation will be plunged into chaos first, as they have just recovered.

- However, chaos will soon engulf the entire continent. Thus, we need to prepare for unexpected situations.

-…

- Regarding the famine issue… will the Continental Protection Management Committee not take care of that?

- The Sacred Democratic Country doesn't agree with the policies that the Continental Protection Management Committee has proposed. In addition, they're using an untrustworthy system at the moment. Of course, the issue isn't solely the system that they're using, but we must also be prepared for any variables we might encounter in the future. Our alliance with Laios will remain, but Miss Oscar has unofficially said that… the Republic, Union of Kingdoms, and the Federation could potentially become threats.

-…

- A large-scale war probably won't happen, but we're trying to make our move with the worst-case scenario in mind. We'll conserve and increase our power. Our eternal allies, the Black Swan Guild and the Red Mercenary Guild, have expressed that they would like to join us.

- The Red Mercenary… the red noonim…

Park Deok-Gu had figured out the answer himself.

Kabooooooooooooooooom!!!

A deafening noise echoed, and the entire city trembled. Those in the meeting room instinctively put their guard up, but they had to have realized that the noise just now wasn't from an enemy.

A red beast covered in blood was jumping around on the outskirts of the castle wall. It seemed that the red beast didn't care about the spells that the mages were maintaining as she jumped around, trying to get to her destination.

Upon entering the battlefield, the red beast fought like a warrior rather than a beast. The beast destroyed, bit, and tore apart every monster in its way, creating a picturesque sight.

The red beast was making me feel respect and joy more than fear, and it finally stood on the summit of the mountain of corpses that it had created. The beast roared once and spoke…

- I think I'm finally sobering up.

CHAPTER 815
THE LAST (48)

- Thank you for your hard work, ma’am.

- You did well, Master.

- It’s been a while, everyone. When is the next wave?

-…

- Find out.

- Yes, ma’am.

- I’m going to take a bath.

- We’ll get it ready for you.

- And something to eat.

- We’ll make preparations so you can eat after you’re done with your bath.

- I want a lot.

- Okay.

- I really want a lot of food.

- Understood.

The denizens of Lindel weren’t the only ones who greeted Cha Hee-Ra when she entered after opening the castle door all by herself. The members of the Red Mercenary Guild lined up first. An attendant quietly placed a heavy-looking fur coat on Cha Hee-Ra's shoulder and cast a look of great respect at her.

Of course, everyone cast the same gaze upon Cha Hee-Ra.

Cha Hee-Ra was armed to the teeth, and she truly looked threatening.

The Red Mercenary Guild's reaction seemed over the top, but I was sure that they weren't making a political statement here, saying that the Red Mercenary Guild was back. They were simply showing respect to their queen.

'They're pretty amazing.'

The members of the Red Mercenary Guild were adventurers capable of becoming famous by themselves throughout the continent, but they were waiting for her to stand up.

The sight showed everyone just how loyal they were to their queen.

The tough mercenaries stood in place and dared not kick up a fuss as if they were telling everyone that a guild wouldn't necessarily fall without their leader.

It was an interesting sight. I had a hunch that they knew about their guild master's inevitable return.

'In that sense, I understand why Ahn Ki-Mo left that guild.'

They did do activities as a group, but I was sure that they did those activities in a way that wasn't to Ahn Ki-Mo's liking. I recall how happy he looked when we recruited him to the Blue Guild.

'Well… '

Anyway, Choi Young-Ki started reporting to the silent Cha Hee-Ra.

Cha Hee-Ra looked like she wasn't listening, but she was nodding.

- The revamped Continental Protection Management Committee has been established. The head of the committee is a man named Song Soo-Kyung, and he's known as the descendant of the Son of Light or a manifestation of him.

- What do you think about him?

- He doesn’t seem to be that ambitious or greedy, but…

-…

- There have been times when I felt that something was off. It’s hard to explain, but I don’t think he really cares about the continent.

- Can you take responsibility for that comment?

- Yes.

- Okay, next.

- This official document is from the revamped Continental Protection Management Committee. The document is asking the heroes of the continent for their cooperation. They plan on creating an organization and controlling these heroes through that organization. Your name was included in the list…

- How dare they…

-…

- How dare they tell me what to do? Tell them to come here and explain this to me if they don’t want me to bash their heads. Next.

- A group of assassins broke into the Blue Guild, targeting Mr. Lee Ki-Young’s body.

-…

- Right now, the Blue Guild…

- It’s such a mess. Next.

‘Looks like it’ll be a busy day for the staffers of the Red Mercenary Guild.’

They’d probably be *really* busy in the next few days—busy to the extent that they wouldn't be able to do their own training. They had to take care of all the issues that they had been ignoring all at once, so some staffers seemed worried about losing their muscles from the inevitable lack of training.

- Has nothing been revealed about the dungeon?

- I'll try to find out more information as soon as possible.

- Request the Black Swan Guild for their cooperation. The Magic Tower… I mean, request a simple report from our second girlfriend. Create a team dedicated to finding out the location of the dungeon and the named monster. Start from the capital…

- What?

- The capital of the Sacred Democratic Country. Laios, the Federation, and then the North.

- When you say the location of the named monster…

- It's a dungeon. It's none of my concern how this place became a dungeon, but it's not strange for the boss monster to be eliminated first to clear that dungeon. If a dungeon named "The Continent Where the Son of Light Was Sacrificed" really exists, then isn't it obvious that there's a named monster in the region where our darling had suffered? Look around the Federation. The 27th Legion incident happened there, right?

'Hee-Ra noona is sharp.'

I couldn't say that it was the right method to clear the dungeon, but it could be a clue. In some ways, she was on point.

'Even I *didn't think about that.'*

I was sure the Blue Guild hadn't thought of that either. Once they had a meeting, I was sure something like this would be mentioned. Now that I thought about it, though, it wasn't really strange that they had forgotten the fact that dungeons usually had boss monsters. After all, the clear conditions had already been decided.

The Blue Guild thought that they needed to adapt to the many different changes in the continent, but Cha Hee-Ra had decided to use the most straightforward method when it came to clearing dungeons. She theorized that a named monster had to have spawned, and it could be related to the Son of Light.

‘I’m sure Lee Ji-Hye had considered that as well.’

I was sure she had prepared the basics; it didn't matter which direction she wanted the dungeon to go. Of course, it was too early to say that clearing the dungeon was the clue, but…

“It’ll be disappointing if a named monster doesn't exist in a dungeon,” I said.

- Gather a few useful guys so they can leave immediately. Also… get me Kim Hyun-Sung. Actually, send him an official invitation. Tell him that I want to have a meal with him.

- Yes, ma’am.

‘Why does it seem like she's gotten even stronger?’

I peeked at Cha Hee-Ra while she was taking a bath, and I still found her intimidating, even though she was in her most vulnerable state.

Cha Hee-Ra definitely thought that she was malnourished as well, as she ate incessantly—no, it was more like she was stuffing nutrients inside her. She seemed like she was creating a physique that could fight rather than nourishing herself.

Just like how mana was accumulating inside Jung Ha-Yan, a different type of power was accumulating inside Cha Hee-Ra as well.

‘She can’t even be considered a human.’

The named figures of the continent were known for their superhuman strength, but there wasn't anyone as powerful as Cha Hee-Ra. She had gotten even stronger by doing whatever she wanted and without doing any training or wielding a sword.

It was a privilege and a talent that couldn’t be bought.

Actually, I wouldn’t even call it a talent.

To her, climbing the ranks or overcoming her limits was like an instinct to her. I finally understood why Cherubim had called her "Red Beast," and why Belial and Benigoa said that she deserved to ascend.

I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung felt the same way because he was giving her a strange look.

They had sent an official invitation, but it was just a simple meeting. However, this was a meaningful meeting, so Kim Hyun-Sung definitely thought that he had to accept the invitation.

Of course, he could have also accepted it unknowingly, or he might have not put much meaning behind his decision. However, Cha Hee-Ra was sensitive to that kind of thing, and she had to have realized what was going on because she was smiling.

- You're funny.

-…

- You're really funny.

- I don't understand what you're saying, Miss Cha Hee-Ra.

- I'm the one who wants to know what your intentions are for being here.

- You're the one who invited me. I thought you had something you wanted to discuss with me about, but if you're here to nitpick about pointless things, then I'll come back next time.

- Alright, let's talk about business. There are many things I want to ask personally and answers I want to hear from you, so just think of this as a meeting between allies. Don't you find it strange? You and I are different types of people…

-…

- No matter how much I think about it, you and I are different types of people. The bluey from the Outer God side isn't in this room, but you glared at me as soon as I entered.

-…

- You were thinking about fighting me, right?

-…

- You unknowingly thought about fighting me, right?

- I'm sure you're misunderstanding me.

- Misunderstanding, my ass. You thought about who would lose the fight between us and if I would die if I got stabbed by that sword of yours.

- You're mistaken. I apologize if you felt that way.

- I'm not asking for an apology, and I'm not blaming you either… I think about it sometimes, and it's something anyone can think about since that's just instinct. I didn't feel any hostility either. If I simply consider it as your fighting spirit, then it's amusing for me.

- But I find it strange… You're the type who doesn't fight without enough reason, so why would you suddenly have that thought while staring at me? We're supposed to work together to clear this dungeon, so why would you have silly thoughts like that?

-…

- I don't think you betrayed my darling, and I don't think you have other intentions, but…

-…

- Do you know something that… others don't?

-…

- Besides the revival of the Son of Light, is there something behind the first choice?

'What's with this mood?'

- Is there something you know that I don't know?

- I don't understand what you're talking about.

- Wouldn't it be better… if we both knew?

'What's going on?'

Cha Hee-Ra was smiling, while Kim Hyun-Sung was staring quietly at her.

'Why is Hee-Ra noona so quick-witted?'

Cha Hee-Ra had never been the type to use her brain, but it didn't mean that she couldn't use her brain at all. She preferred trusting her instincts, but she could choose not to do that as well. I knew she was sensitive to threats and was pretty quick-witted, but I never imagined she'd say something like that to Kim Hyun-Sung.

'What's going on, noona? Did you awaken, or are you drunk? And what's wrong with you, Kim Hyun-Sung? Have you seriously gone mad?'

Actually, he hadn't shown any hostility. A swordsman had a penchant for measuring the strength of their opponent. Cha Hee-Ra had practically promoted herself about being *pretty damn strong*, so it was natural that he'd think about dueling her, but still…

'Why are you thinking about that in the first place? It isn't the end yet.'

'Why are you already trying to execute Plan B? Don't even think about it.'

Perhaps they were just trying to feel each other out. It could be a bait that Cha Hee-Ra had simply thrown out, and Kim Hyun-Sung could've thought about it unknowingly as well.

However, I could feel the air changing subtly.

Cha Hee-Ra was smiling while releasing her mana, and Kim Hyun-Sung was still looking at her quietly. Her red hair billowed beneath her mana's influence, and Kim Hyun-Sung had to have noticed the Red Beast's eyes changing because his hand twitched in response.

The twitching was a defensive mechanism telling him that there was a predator strong enough to be a threat to him nearby. His body was telling him that the woman before him was capable of killing him.

'Don't do it, damn it. Don't do that even as a joke. Don't do it, Hee-Ra noona.'

- I don't want to fight.

‘Yeah, Hyun-Sung. Don’t do it.’

- Really? Doesn’t seem like it to me.

‘Why are you being nitpicky? Stop it.’

- I don’t. Want to fight. Right now.

“You crazy bastard…” I commented.

- I apologize for interrupting you, but there's news about the capital, Miss Cha Hee-Ra.

Someone interrupted, but I wasn’t sure whether I should feel relieved about it or not.

- I’m busy right now.

- A named monster has appeared in the capital. It’s an undead dragon, and a mysterious figure is standing on top of the castle in the Sacred Democratic Country.

-…

- We received news from Laios! Apparently, a massive amount of mana is…

- *Ha…*

- We've received news from the Federation! Apparently…

- That’s funny…

- There's news…

- It’s really funny.

Kim Hyun-Sung and Cha Hee-Ra got up at the same time.

- I’m heading to the Federation.

- I…

-...

- I...

CHAPTER 816
THE LAST (49)

[When the day of destruction approached, the Leader of the Sacred Democratic Country got on her knees and cried, saying, “Please take pity on us these lambs, and give them one more chance. Please show mercy one last time to those the Son of Light loves and cherishes.”

[The Son of Light said, “I've already given them a chance.”

[Aris replied, “What must I do? If the Son of Light truly wants to judge our sins, what choice should I make? I am but Aris, a lowly maid who had only managed to come all this way thanks to the grace of the Son of Light.”

[The Son of Light responded, "Omitted…” - From an unnamed Bible, Chapter 27, Verse 19.]

- I…

- Kim Hyun-Sung, why do you think I chose the Federation?

-…

- Think carefully. Why would I go there of all places?

-…

- I could’ve picked the capital where the undead dragon is rampaging and where my darling was killed. I could have also gone to Laios, which was once devastated by that commander’s spell.

- I could’ve also picked a place where nothing really happened. Now that I think about it, there's a demon named Salit there, so why should I go all the way there and fight the 27th Legion? It’s not even funny. I don’t know what your goal is, but I’m sure you have a reason.

-…

- There has to be a place that comes to mind…

-…

- There's only one named monster that spawned in the North, and it's nothing more than a corpse. It doesn't matter if you run or follow a different plan that's in your head. It's your choice, and I won't force you.

'The North… '

Unlike the other places, only one named monster spawned in the North, and it was just a corpse.

'Is this place getting special treatment?'

It could be a lack of funds, or it could've been difficult to create a way to fight against the Outer God, but Kim Hyun-Sung remained quiet.

He was staring blankly in the direction where Cha Hee-Ra had left, seemingly at a loss for words. He looked like there were many things on his mind, but in the end, he stood up and walked slowly. The red mercenaries showed him respect, but he didn't even look their way as he walked out of the guild.

'Noona, did you really have to attack him mentally like that? She's just… '

I had no idea what to do—no, it was more like I couldn't make a choice.

My movements were restricted, and it was impossible to take care of all the things that were happening at the same time. Even if I were down there, I wouldn't have been able to take care of everything. The most I could do was assign the right people at the right place…

In that sense, the situation wasn't all that bad. Hee-Ra noona and her guild had decided to go on an expedition to the Federation and the mana gathering above Laios…

'It's highly likely that Ha-Yan will take care of that.'

Park Deok-Gu and Han Sora would probably join her.

It was like a re-enactment of the incident where the neutral nation was almost destroyed under the attacks of Demon Summoner Jin Cheong. Aside from the fact that I wasn't there, it was a complete re-enactment.

I wasn't sure about Hee-Ra noona's plan, but I knew what her intentions were. It was like she was questioning whether they'd be able to save the continent without me. It seemed like a pretty romantic revenge, but to say that was her goal would be…

'Too romantic. There isn't a need to go this far.'

I had a feeling that she was bluffing, and her goal could actually be to get holy power from the entire continent because it seemed like they had to re-enact the story of the Son of Light.

'Laios… '

I wasn't too worried about it because Jung Ha-Yan had basically stopped the spell that Jin Cheong had cast using Belial all by herself. Of course, the difficulty would get adjusted based on her current level, but she could definitely handle it.

The real deal was the Linked Quest that'd pop up after the Laios incident.

The war between the Republic and the Sacred Democratic Country as well as the 27th Legion incident. The 27th incident ended with a blood battle between Belial and Benigoa, so I wasn't sure what kind of *event* was waiting to replace that, but in the worst-case scenario…

'Will they have to fight a manifestation of Belial?'

No one knew how to clear the dungeon, so it was best to deal with things as they came, as Cha Hee-Ra and Jung Ha-Yan had found their places at the very least.

Hee-Ra noona had volunteered to go to the Federation, so she had to be guilty about what she had done as the Commander-in-Chief at the time. I had been suffering from a malady since then, and I was sure that she didn't want to make the same mistake again.

'It's not a bad pick.'

Those two were trustworthy, so I was actually worried about something else.

The war in the North and the revolution in the Sacred Democratic Country had led to the loss of important resources.

'The difficulty is too high.'

I saw a large dragon sitting on top of the castle wall. The dragon was roaring, and I saw a blurry figure who looked like me on top of the dragon.

The dragon looked more like a bloodless ghost rather than an undead, and it turned its indescribable face at the Sacred Democratic Country. The dragon looked like it was going to swallow everything at any moment, but it didn't move.

I could tell that it was waiting for something.

The denizens of the capital were shocked, but most of them were praying. The soldiers tried to evacuate them, but they seemed to be thinking that they needed to show respect to the manifestation of the Son of Light on top of the castle wall.

[The Revolution of the Democratic Country—a main event of the Mythic-rank dungeon, "The Continent Where the Son of Light Was Sacrificed" will soon begin.]

When the system's voice vanished, spirits soon manifested all over the place. The spirits wielded spears, shields, and swords as they ran toward their enemies. This wasn't a type of quest that could be cleared by eliminating the named monster.

- W-What is that? Damn it…

- Prepare for battle! Shit! Prepare for battle!

- Those are spirits! Prepare to fight! Evacuate the civilians!

- *Ahhhhhhhhh!* Run!

The named monster descended.

The soldiers and the praying denizens immediately started panicking.

— Kill those traitors!

— They’re dirty traitors!

— Let’s bring judgment to those dirty traitors who have stained the empire with chaos! Honorary soldiers of the empire!

The spirits of the people from the Benigoa Holy Empire were the ones attacking the Sacred Democratic Country. A large number of armed troops collided with our troops.

‘The difficulty is too high.’

If this was the only incident that was happening right now, then the Sacred Democratic Country might be able to handle it. However, a few key personnel were missing, so the Sacred Democratic Country was instantly plunged into chaos.

The sight reminded me of pandemonium.

The spirits would disappear upon getting stabbed, but they'd reappear and charge at our troops once again. The denizens were becoming more and more scared until they were finally terrified.

— We’re bitter! We feel wronged that the long history of the empire was destroyed by these dirty traitors!

- Don’t give in! Don’t listen to the voice of those spirits!

— Today, we’ll reclaim our glorious empire! Just like how the empire was destroyed when the Sacred Democratic Country was established, we’ll do the same to finally rest in peace. We’ll eliminate every single one of them and make them feel eternal pain!

- Stop the spirits! Stop them!

— For eternal rest. For the glory of the glorious empire. For the life we lost…

- We must ask Lindel for reinforcements.

- This is happening all over the continent, including Laios and the Federation… and we don’t know how much longer they can hold out. W-We should stop them right here. We have no choice but to hold out.

- What are we supposed to do when swords and magic don't even work on them?

- We need to evacuate the civilians first. We need to think about other issues later.

- O God, are you really abandoning us? Son of Light, are you really abandoning the place you've built with your own hands?

- It's too early to lose hope. I'm sure there's a way. I-I'm sure of it.

'A way… a way.'

They had to be able to hold out.

Father Basel, the holy knights, and the priests of the Sacred Democratic Country were holding on, so they could definitely stop the spirits. Obviously, it was a difficult task, as the spirits seemed to have unlimited respawns. If the named monster ended up making a move during this chaos, then it'd be impossible to clear this dungeon.

'No, there's no such thing as an event that cannot be cleared.'

Since it was a dungeon that the system had allowed to exist, then I was sure we could clear this dungeon event. After all, the system would never allow a dungeon event that couldn't be cleared.

- Miss Oscar.

-…

- Miss Oscar.

-… Yes, Senator Caitlyn.

- Are you okay?

- Yes, I'm fine. I'm… fine.

- The revamped Continental Protection Management Committee has asked Lindel, Celia, and Dawan for reinforcements. The Mist Summoner and the Sniper of the Eight Seats will soon arrive with their griffons. The Sunset Swordsman has yet to respond.

-…

- I received a report that Miss Jung Ha-Yan will be heading to Laios with some of her guild members. We believe it's the same sign that's happening here. If the mana above Laios is allowed to fall, Laios, the Republic, and the Sacred Democratic Country will be in danger.

- I see. Even Miss Jung Ha-Yan… Thank you, Senator Caitlyn.

- What?

- Senator Caitlyn.

- Yes?

- What do you think?

- What do you mean…

- What do you think about this fight?

-…

- If this fight is really the Son of Light's way of judging us, what are we supposed to do? Who is our enemy, and who are we supposed to protect? If destruction is what he wants… If this outcome is what he *truly* wants, then what are we supposed to do?

- That's…

- Father Basel was careful with his words. I know we need to evacuate the civilians, but I feel really bad for them because they have to face such a cruel fate.

- H-However, I'm afraid it might go against Mr. Lee Ki-Young's wishes. M-Maybe we just need to accept our fate.

- Miss Oscar.

- Maybe this is the least we can do to atone and undo our mistakes.

Everyone would eventually return to their posts, but there were people who couldn't

leave their posts in the first place.

'They don't need reinforcements.'

Neither Kim Hyun-Sung nor Jung Ha-Yan had to come here. The spirits wouldn't die, and I was sure the event that Ji-Hye noona had prepared wouldn't be cleared by eliminating the monsters.

The revolution of the Sacred Democratic Country…

The maid—Aris, no, Oscar.

"You're the important piece here," I said.

You were probably cast for this stage.

- Son of Light.

The revolutionist, who had abandoned her previous name, cast a nervous gaze outside the window.

CHAPTER 817
THE LAST (50)

"I didn't know you were writing a letter. Looks like I came at the wrong time, Miss Oscar," Lee Ki-Young said.

"It's fine, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. I'm almost done writing the letter…" I[1] said.

"Are you…" Lee Ki-Young trailed off.

"Yes. I don't want my mother to worry. I know I've told you this many times, but when we're alone, please call me Aris. You sound really uncomfortable… It would make me feel a lot better if you treated me like before," I requested.

"I'm sorry for making you feel that way, Miss Aris. However, I'm simply showing respect," Lee Ki-Young said.

"You know… that I'm not someone who deserves such generous treatment from you, Mr. Lee Ki-Young," I said.

"I don't think there's a distinction between those who deserve it and those who don't," Lee Ki-Young said.

"Yes, that's true…" I mumbled.

"Like I told you before, there's no such thing as a lowly life. There may be people who differentiate it, but all humans are the same; everyone has something they deserve. It's the same for you, Miss Aris. There's no need to humble yourself. No matter what kind of environment you grew up in, all humans are the same under Goddess Benigoa," Lee Ki-Young explained.

"Looks like I've… forgotten about that," I said.

"Are you worried?" Lee Ki-Young asked.

"…"

"..."

"Yes, I think I am. I'm scared... and it's burdensome. I-I sometimes have nightmares," I confessed.

"..."

"I have nightmares of the people supporting me pointing fingers at me, blaming me for making a mistake. I saw myself on the podium as Oscar, but my comrades, who trusted and followed me, were pointing their fingers at me.

"By then, the Oscar on the podium would vanish. The long hair that I had cut would reappear, and I would no longer be wearing my uniform. I'd see Aris wearing a maid uniform. The stupid, frightened, and oppressed Aris would be looking around with her pale face.

"Her comrades would then throw rocks at her, saying that I've f-fooled them and that... I'm not worthy to lead them... They also don't believe that I can lead them to a new era," I described.

"..."

"I wanted to say something, but my voice wouldn't come out as if it was being blocked by something. I know you and Goddess Benigoa are right. However... I must've been living life like this for too long. Have you ever..." I trailed off.

"..."

"Have you... Have you ever regretted choosing me? Have you ever regretted that decision, even slightly? Have you ever thought that you've made the wrong choice?" I questioned.

"Miss Aris..." Lee Ki-Young said.

"It's nothing. I shouldn't have asked. There's no way you'd make a mistake... I'm sorry," I apologized.

"You don't need to apologize," Lee Ki-Young said.

"I-I should probably prepare my speech... for tomorrow," I stuttered.

“You’re not stupid, and you don’t need to feel frightened or oppressed, Miss Aris. But if you’re still worried, don’t forget that I’m always by your side,” Lee Ki-Young reminded me.

“…”

“Yes, I haven’t forgotten, Son of Light. But…” I trailed off.

“…”

“But the Son of Light isn’t here right now, and I’m really scared that I might make the wrong choice. I’m afraid I’ll be held responsible for all of this; I can't contain my fear of making the wrong decision,” I continued.

— The traitors…

“…”

— The traitors deserve to be judged for their sins! They will receive divine punishment for tainting the glory of the empire.

“Evacuate the civilians! Soldiers of the Sacred Democratic Country! Do not forget what we're fighting for!”

The scene was familiar to me, and it was a memory engraved deep in my mind. It had remained that way, despite the many crazy times I had experienced so far.

The vast Sacred Democratic Country, the allies fighting together for a great cause, the tall clock tower, and our glorious nation that I thought would last forever.

I saw the Son of Light who had always been supporting me.

I was sure that memory would remain in the annals of the Sacred Democratic Country forever. However, I truly didn't expect that the light of the Sacred Democratic Country would fade one day.

I smiled bitterly, and I looked outside quietly as the feeling of incompetence enveloped me. Perhaps I already knew things were going to end like this; perhaps it was better to say that I couldn’t meet his expectations.

“Revolution. A glorious victory…” I muttered.

The empire fell, and the Sacred Democratic Country was established. Many things changed, but at the same time, it felt there weren't that many changes. People were still hungry and poor, but the weak could finally raise their voices.

My allies had changed, and we had failed to protect the sacred democracy.

The revolution was a success and a failure at the same time, but we were in denial of that. We could prove that the people who had gone against the Goddess' will were wrong and that we were right, but it wouldn't change the fact that the nation had become corrupt and a new hierarchy was established.

Unfortunately, the only thing that changed was the higher-ups. Perhaps I should have known that the Son of Light would be disappointed. This could be the outcome of tainting the righteous will of that angelic man.

“I wonder if he regrets it,” I said.

— Kill the traitors!

“Damn it! Hang in there! Soldiers of the Sacred Democratic Country! Hang in there just a little longer and reinforcements will arrive!”

“Is this really the end? O God!”

“Son of Light, have you really abandoned us? Goddess Benigoa, are you really going to judge mankind?”

I saw my reflection in the window, and I saw the maid, Aris, with her long hair and maid uniform.

When I closed my eyes…

“What are you doing here, Miss Oscar?” A voice echoed behind me.

“…”

“…”

I saw a woman with red hair. Ah, right, she was here.

“Senator Charlotte,” I called out.

“I asked what you were doing here,” Charlotte repeated.

“I was looking outside,” I replied.

“You must be out of your mind. Have you given up?” Charlotte questioned.

“I haven’t. I-I was just… deep in my thoughts. The will of the Son of Light…” I answered.

“…”

“I was just thinking about the will of the Son of Light,” I told her.

“…”

“…”

“You stupid bitch,” Charlotte cursed.

“…”

“You’re nothing but a stupid and lowly maid,” Charlotte added.

“…”

“I was a fool to believe that you were fit to be a leader. You’re nothing but a worthless insect. I was a fool to feel relieved that you’re in that position rather than my father and my sister. You lowly bitch,” Charlotte continued.

“You might be right, Princess,” I told her.

The woman in front of me was fit to be a leader.

There was determination in her eyes, and she had an elegant bearing. She wouldn’t be easily swayed as well, and she'd stand back up no matter what kind of hardships she would experience.

She was the kind of person I had been drawing in my head.

“I’m not a princess,” Charlotte reminded me.

“I did not manage to change anything, Miss Charlotte. I-I managed to change nothing. I’m nothing but a stupid and lowly maid who can’t do anything without the will of the Son of Light,” I told Charlotte.

“…”

“Someone once said a human’s nature doesn’t change. I denied that saying, but now, I don’t think they're wrong. Even though I had received a new name and a new role, I don’t think my nature had actually changed.

"I was a maid—Charlia’s maid. I've become Oscar, but now that I think about it, I'm still a maid. The only thing that changed was my master; I'm no longer Charlia's maid but *his* maid," I explained.

“…”

“I cannot go against his will, Miss Charlotte. I can’t go against what he wants. You’re more fit to be the leader of the Democratic Country. You’re the only person who can save the Democratic Country,” I continued.

“Seriously…”

“Look outside, Miss Charlotte. They want the empire. Those spirits want the glory of the empire that was once celebrated. You’re the only remaining successor of the empire and the only ray of hope capable of protecting this place,” I added.

My hands were shaking. I removed the seal on my chest and extended it slowly to Charlotte.

Charlotte frowned, but I was used to it. She once often looked at me as if she hated me to the bones and found me extremely disgusting.

I couldn’t quite understand it, but I was relieved to see that familiar expression.

However, she suddenly started crying.

I couldn't describe the look on her face, and my heart sank at the sight.

"Many people died," Charlotte said.

"That's why we need to save them! I'm sure you can do it, and you can turn everything back to the way it was before," I told her.

"Many people had died to establish the Sacred Democratic Country. This country was established because of the blood and sacrifice of righteous people. No matter what happened during that time, that fact doesn't change," Charlotte explained.

"…"

"My father and older sister died; the people who didn't agree with our cause were buried as well. The Sacred Democratic Country is a country that was built on sacrifice and I… was proud of all of this, which was really disgusting," Charlotte said.

"…"

"I was proud of the new denizens, the people who had gathered for one cause, and for becoming a part of the people who will lead this new nation. I knew the methods were wrong and shedding blood wasn't the right thing to do, but I was happy about the changes. I felt that the blood of those who had sacrificed for this country was righteous! That was what I felt!" Charlotte roared.

"Miss Charlotte," I mumbled.

"B-But… in the end! I was just being delusional. The sacred democracy was nothing more than a tool. *Ha… haha… hahahaha!* In the end, the Son of Light was wrong. He was wrong!" Charlotte yelled.

"He wasn't wrong, Charlotte!" I shouted.

"Shut up, you lowly bitch!" Charlotte cursed.

"…"

"How dare you look me straight in the eye and raise your voice at me?! You're nothing but a dirty maid, so you better know your place!" Charlotte insulted.

My face felt hot.

Slap!

I was thrown to the side.

“Stay in your place, you disgusting thing! You've chosen this path, and your lowly roots are going to change your fate once again,” Charlotte said.

I saw Charlotte raising her hand with tears in her eyes.

“You and I are different. I won’t abandon this place,” Charlotte said.

“…”

“I will never abandon the Democratic Country. I won’t abandon this blood-stained land. Never… Never…” Charlotte muttered.

“…”

“This isn’t mine so I won’t take it,” Charlotte said.

“He’s not wro—”

“Then prove it, you disgusting thing,” Charlotte interrupted me. Then, she threw away the seal of the Sacred Democratic Country.

The sight of Charlotte turning her back on me and the cacophonous din outside made everything seem like a dream.

I started crying without realizing it—I cried out loud. I hugged the dirty seal tightly. There was no Oscar. The one standing in *that* position wasn’t Oscar. She wouldn't be seen as the revolutionist who had led the glorious Democratic Country's revolution.

I had ruined everything. I was sure they’d see me as Aris—the broken maid whose mask had been removed. However, I got up despite my red cheek, messy hair, and dirty uniform. This was probably the first time I would show myself as Aris.

1. Oscar’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 818
THE LAST (51)

I ran until I was out of breath. I wasn't sure why I was running, but I had to keep moving. Nothing might change, and I wasn't expecting sudden changes either. I might not be of any help. Actually, I could just get in the way, but I had to keep going.

"Miss Oscar!"

"Miss Oscar! You must evacuate."

'What am I doing?'

I had no idea what I was trying to do. I unknowingly turned my head and saw our troops fighting the spirits. There were troops evacuating the civilians despite the chaotic situation, and I also saw Miss Charlotte wielding her sword and fighting the enemy.

Everyone looked desperate. I looked out the window, and I seemed to have seen the Son of Light quietly watching the end of the Sacred Democratic Country.

— It's the traitors! Over there! They're over there! It's a group of traitors!

— The princess who has abandoned the empire is here! The princess of the empire who has abandoned her own blood is here! The lump of cancer that destroyed the empire is working with the group of traitors!

"I'm not a princess, spirits of the empire!" Charlotte shouted.

— Are you denying your true self?! Are you denying the will of the empire?!

"The will of the empire was buried with those who had sacrificed themselves. I'm a denizen of the Sacred Democratic Country! I'm a human who's no different from the others here. You people are mere spirits that have been forgotten!" Charlotte yelled.

— Are you denying your origin?! Are you denying your uniqueness?! Are you

denying the fact that you're of royal lineage and that you're the ruler of the empire?!

"I'm not unique! The ones who changed this land are the truly unique ones! The ones who had sacrificed and shed their blood for this land are the ones who are unique!

"Look back at the imperial family you consider unique! How can you say that about them when they haven't changed a single thing?!

"The ones who had changed this country are the real rulers! The people who had shed their blood on this land and had developed it are the ones worthy of leading this country!" Charlotte yelled.

— You're stupid! Just stupid!

"All of you are the ones who are stupid for being tied to the past! You guys are truly the stupid ones for being shackled to the past! We will fight! I will be buried here as well, and I will be remembered as Charlotte of the Sacred Democratic Country, not the princess of a fallen empire!" Charlotte declared.

I heard a voice I wasn't supposed to hear, and her voice echoed throughout the Sacred Democratic Country.

"Why are you resisting, Miss Charlotte?" I questioned.

I was sure there was a way to comfort the angry spirits, and I was sure she was the only person who could calm them down.

"Why…"

She wanted to save the civilians, so why was she fighting with the troops? Actually, I knew the answer. She might be trying to protect our glorious history by resisting the spirits—no, I was sure she wanted to protect our pride.

"Don't let the enemy take down the Sacred Democratic Country that we've built through sacrifice and blood! Remember how we got this far! Remember how we reclaimed this place!" Charlotte shouted.

I could hear her voice clearly, and it was making my heart race.

They were all putting their life on the line for their comrades, their future, their

glory, the glory of their future generations, and for history.

Charlotte didn't want to give those up, and she wanted to protect them, even though she had told me that the bloody revolution was a failure. Her will to do that might be the reason she was doing all this.

Booooooooooom!!!

There was a deafening explosion.

I went flying, and my vision swam. I thought losing consciousness would be better, but I immediately got back up. The explosion had created a large crater before me. I could feel the wind and the heat; the heart-wrenching screams nearby felt a bit more real, too.

I looked up again and saw the Son of Light. It looked like he was looking at me.

I bit my lips and climbed up the railing before grabbing the wall ahead of me.

This was reckless, and I'd die if I ended up falling.

Actually, dying might not be a bad idea. Aris wasn't a hero. I had no special powers, and I wasn't qualified to do anything. I reached out my hand again without knowing the reason I was approaching the Son of Light's illusion.

'What am I doing right now?'

Was I trying to convince him?

'Will this change anything? What difference can I make?'

Would this change anything when I was made out of lies in the first place?

I wasn't sure, but…

"I want to change," I said.

I wasn't anything special, and I struggled as I approached the Son of Light. However, I might be able to make a change if I just put my mind to it.

My arms and legs were shaking, and I was running out of breath.

A fierce breeze blew past me just then, and I trembled violently.

"*Aaaahhhh!*"

- Kill them!

"Stop! Stop them!"

I heard shouting nearby, and I saw debris falling toward me. I gnashed my teeth and spread my arms again. Then, I forced my frozen legs to move. I wanted to believe that Aris could do it as well, not just Oscar.

"Please… please!" I shouted.

I stretched out my arm again…

"*Ah!*"

I felt weightless. It seemed that I had lost my footing.

'Even something as small as this… '

To think that I couldn't even accomplish something as small as this…

Aris would die here without accomplishing anything.

Just as that thought popped into my head, I heard a voice.

"You can… open your eyes, Miss Aris."

"…"

"Miss Aris." The voice called out to me.

"You're…" I said.

"I'm Jo Hye-Jin of the Blue Guild. Please excuse my rudeness," Jo Hye-Jin said.

“W-Why are you here…” I asked.

“Were you on your way to see the sub guild master?” Jo Hye-Jin asked, pulling me up to her griffon.

“Y-Yes!” I answered.

“I’ll take you there,” Jo Hye-Jin offered.

“…”

“…”

“It’s not a bad thing to receive help, Miss Aris,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

It was like she knew what I was thinking, but…

“You just need to do what you can do and what you want to do,” Jo Hye-Jin added.

I nodded after hearing her comforting words. I noticed her quietly placing her spear to the back, and I felt a shiver down my spine when I grabbed her spear. Then, she leaned back with a smile.

I looked down again, and the battle was still taking place. Reinforcements had to have arrived because they were stopping the spirits, but I heard many voices. I saw people struggling and screaming because they wanted to protect the Sacred Democratic Country.

“Son of Light…” I mumbled.

-…

“Son of Light!” I shouted.

-…

“Please stop them!” I begged.

-…

“Please let go of your anger. Everything is my fault. This is all my fault! They didn’t do anything wrong. The only thing they did wrong was trusting and following someone unqualified like me. It’s not their fault so please… please…” I said.

-…

“Son of Light… if you can hear me please… answer me. Please help me… so that I can carry the burden… and complete my role, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” I begged.

-…

“You love them, Mr. Lee Ki-Young! You love them more than anyone! You said their ignorance of it isn’t a sin! You said the one leading the people is at fault, not the denizens of the empire! Mr. Lee Ki-Young!” I shouted.

-…

“They did nothing wrong! If someone did something wrong and someone had to be judged, then it should be me. That’s the right thing to do!” I exclaimed.

However, I didn’t hear his voice.

I looked at Mr. Lee Ki-Young again while tightening my grip on the spear, but I didn’t hear anything.

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Mr. Lee Ki-Young! Please forgive our sins. Take pity on them. Please give them one more chance. Please show… the people you love mercy… one last… time… *Heuk*… Please show them mercy one last time. Please… please… I beg you,” I begged.

And that was when a radiant light erupted from the spear.

- I have already… given them a chance.

I wasn’t the only one who heard the voice.

I wasn’t sure what was going on, but everyone looked up.

“…”

- I've already given them a chance.

“I…”

-…

“What choice should I make? What choice must I make for you to forgive them? If you tell me to take my own life, I’ll gladly do it. If you tell me to swim in the sea of eternal pain for the rest of my life, I’ll do it.

"If you truly want to judge our sins… what choice should I make? I am but Aris, a lowly maid who had only managed to come all this way thanks to your grace.” I asked.

- I said I've already given them a chance.

“I don’t understand. What kind of chance did you give them? This stupid maid doesn’t know what kind of chance you’ve bestowed upon us, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” I said.

- You.

“…”

- You… are the chance that I gave to them.

“…”

- The proud daughter of revolution. You don’t need to ask me for permission. I didn’t choose you. You chose yourself. You made yourself qualified; you secured it yourself, and you changed everything by yourself.

“*Soooob! Sniff!*”

- Daughter of revolution. Achieve what you want to achieve by yourself.

[When the day of destruction approached, the Leader of the Sacred Democratic Country got on her knees and cried, saying, “Please take pity on us these lambs, and give them one more chance. Please show mercy one last time to those the Son of Light loves and cherishes.”

[The Son of Light said, “I've already given them a chance.”

[Aris replied, “What must I do? If the Son of Light truly wants to judge our sins, what choice should I make? I am but Aris, a lowly maid who had only managed to come all this way thanks to the grace of the Son of Light.”]

“*Soooob! Sniff! Soooob! Sniff!*”

[The Son of Light responded, “Daughter of revolution. You don’t need to ask me for permission. I didn’t choose you. You made yourself the person you are today… Follow your own will." - From an unnamed Bible, Chapter 27, Verse 19.]

A massive, radiant light abruptly pervaded the skies.

CHAPTER 819
THE LAST (52)

The warm light that seemed to be accepting of everything felt like it was comforting those who were exhausted from battle. I[1] had experienced and witnessed many battles and miracles, but moments like this would always make my heart race.

Kennen, the playboy who was swearing just now, looked at the sky with a blank face.

The radiant light had illuminated the dark sky where nothing seemed visible. It was fine even if that wasn't a miracle or if it was simply a light meant to deceive people. It was enough to light up this place, and a certain thought popped up in my mind.

"The Son of Light… hasn't abandoned the continent. He…" I trailed off.

"Of course, he hasn't abandoned the continent. *Haha*. There's no one in this world who loves the continent more than him," Kennen said.

"You're acting really proud for someone who was swearing a moment ago, Kennen," I said.

"I-I mean, do I really need to explain myself? I was just thinking about how unlucky I was. I was going to retire and live a normal life, but I ended up in this mess when I came out to see the capital.

"Weren't you thinking about the same thing, Alex? You said you were tired of living as a swordsman. You even talked me into retiring with you," Kennen complained.

"…"

"Anyway, we always end up in unlucky situations whenever we hang out with George. He wanted to see the capital, even though things were messy at the moment. His timing is just bad. It's like he's proving that he's a third-rate gambler. You should say something as well, Alex," Kennen suggested.

"Well, I…"

“What?” Kennen asked.

“I actually think it’s a good thing, Kennen,” I told Kennen.

“What?”

“It might be a good thing that we’re here,” I said.

“You’re crazy. You've gotten addicted to war, Alex. I think you should visit a temple or a psychiatric hospital before it gets worse. If you don’t want to go alone, I can—”

“It’s not like that,” I interrupted Kennen.

I didn’t know how to explain it, but I wasn’t addicted.

It was more like I was glad to be here together with everyone rather than being glad that I could fight. I didn’t have some grand motive like fighting for the country, fighting for history, or fighting for the future generations.

We were the type of humans who *went with the flow.* We wouldn't show resistance, and we'd adapt when necessary. Whenever there was a huge turning point or a huge threat, I would volunteer to fight in big and small battles, but… it was different this time.

I couldn’t help but look up, and I saw Miss Oscar holding up a holy spear.

I saw an illusory figure of a dragon and the illusory figure of the Son of Light covered by the radiant light. The large dragon lifted its head and roared. The illusory dragon that looked like it was going to swallow the Sacred Democratic Country seemed like it was rooting for us.

I felt a shiver down my spine when I saw Miss Oscar holding up a sword while standing on a railing. Miss Oscar looked different from her usual self. She was always elegant and clean. Today, however, she looked similar to us. She was wounded, exhausted, and weak.

Regardless, she looked strong, and she seemed like she would get back up even after falling down. I saw an ardent fervor in her eyes. Of course, I couldn’t see her eyes properly, as she was far away, but I could see her fiery gaze and her tear-stained face.

A hero was born right before my eyes; I had witnessed a human overcoming their limits by themselves and growing even stronger. Miss Oscar stood proudly on the battlefield as an ordinary human, not as the leader of a fallen country.

“I’m glad I came here,” I said.

“Crazy bastard. Alex, you’re mad! Say something to him, George!” Kennen yelled.

“She looks cool,” George commented.

“Shit, I’m the only sane one here. Damn it! I’m a fool for hanging out with you two. I’m the idiot…” Kennen shouted.

As the radiant light brightened, a loud voice echoed.

“I will not be defeated!” Oscar shouted.

“…”

“I won’t run, hide, or be defeated! Even if I am defeated, I’ll get back up and ignite the flame of battle and resistance! People of the Sacred Democratic Country! Our comrades who have made this place their home! I… I was afraid. I was afraid of losing all of you and going against the will of the Son of Light. I’m no different from all of you who are standing in that place and resisting while raising your swords,” Oscar continued.

“…”

“I didn’t know what I was fighting for and why I was fighting in the first place. I was a normal human being that’s no different from all of you, and most importantly, I was afraid of change,” Oscar added.

“…”

“However, I have raised the flag of sword and battle. Despite not knowing the meaning and philosophy behind the legacy that the Son of Light and the Goddess of Light had left behind, I've decided to raise my sword,” Oscar said.

“…”

“And it's all because I've realized that it's the right thing to do. I felt it deep within my heart—we’re all the same, so we must move forward together for a greater purpose,” Oscar said.

“…”

“Even if we fail or fall, I know that we'll end up heading to the right path as long as we gather for the greater good,” Oscar continued.

“Oscar…” I mumbled.

“Many people have sacrificed themselves! Yes… Many… many people sacrificed themselves!” Oscar shouted.

“Daughter of revolution,” I muttered.

“A lot of blood had to be shed to establish the Democratic Country. We had to sacrifice many things, but despite sacrificing many of our comrades, we failed to create the Sacred Democratic Country we wanted, but…!

"I do not consider it a failure!” Oscar roared.

“…”

“I don’t think that we failed! It's just part of the process! Failure and change are just a part of the process to walk on the right path! It’s just a process to find the right answer! I still have no idea where the right path is, but you consider me as your leader, even though I might not discover the answer to that question until my very last breath.

"However, we’ll eventually find the answer. We need to express what we feel deep in our hearts and one day, we’ll surely make it come true!” Oscar yelled.

“…”

“Just like how the people on this land had sacrificed themselves for the Sacred Democratic Country so that they can be the foundation of the country, I also believe we’ll be the foundation for the greater good!” Oscar added.

— The lowly maid is wearing the mask of a king! Look at that traitor!

“I’m not lowly! I’m neither lowly nor dirty!” Oscar shouted.

— The princess of the empire and the crazy maid are denying their true identity!

“I said I’m not lowly! No one is lowly in this world. I can now confidently say that with my own voice,” Oscar said.

— You!

“We’re going to fight and resist to deny you! Spirits, we will fight until the end even if our arms, legs, and even our body collapses! For a better country! For the sacrifice and for the blood that was shed for this country! For myself! For ourselves! For the continent! We’ll fight! So…” Oscar trailed off.

“…”

“Revolutionize! My comrades!” Oscar roared.

That’s when I heard an unknown voice.

Boom! Boom!

— Revolutionize! My comrades!!

“*Ha… haha…*”

I couldn’t help but look around.

“What are we supposed to do about this? Hey, George. I’m not dreaming right now, right?” Kennen asked.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

— Revolutionize! My comrades!! My brothers!

“Amazing. Simply amazing. I didn’t think I would live long enough to see this,” Kennen said.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

— Revolutionize and fight! Raise the flag of victory!

"*Ha… hahaha, hahaha!* I can't believe we get to fight together! I can't believe we get to go to war with them! *Hahaha!* You were right, Alex!" Kennen shouted.

"I recommend you visit a temple, Kennen. You're addicted to war," I said, teasing him.

"*Hahahahahaha!!* We're at the center of history!" Kennen laughed.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

— Revolutionize! My comrades! Raise your swords of war!

"Was Miss Oscar… aware of this all along?" I questioned.

I saw spirits standing up slowly next to me, and they raised their swords and flags as if they were replying to Oscar's words. They pointed their swords at the enemy spirits, and I saw my comrades getting up as well.

They took their own stances and got ready to charge at them at any moment.

They stomped their feet to match the volume of the illusory dragon's roar.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The loud noise was making my heart pound wildly against my chest.

Had the Daughter of Revolution known that this was going to happen? Had she known that the spirits of the people who had sacrificed themselves were going to rise and raise their flags once again?

I looked up at her, but I couldn't find the answer. However, I saw her crying while hugging the seal of the Sacred Democratic Country. She swept her gaze across the Sacred Democratic Country while holding the seal with a dumbfounded look. She didn't hide nor hold back her tears, and she cried as if telling herself this was her true self.

— Revolutionize! For the Daughter of Revolution! For the future of the Sacred Democratic Country!

“I’ll lead the way! *Heuk…* I will! I will! Always lead the way for all of you! My comrades! I will never let the blood of those who had sacrificed themselves… be in vain!” Oscar yelled.

I raised my sword.

“My dear comrades!” Oscar shouted.

I saw her riding a griffon and the fighting spirit boiling within me made me roar unknowingly. I didn’t know what George was thinking, but he was smiling quietly.

Kennen was cheering as well.

We cheered as if we had been brainwashed.

“Revolutionize! Revolutionize!”

— Raise your flags!

“Let’s fight! For the Democratic Country! For my country! Let’s fight!”

— Lift your swords and rise!

“Revolutionize! Revolutionize! *Hahahaha!* Revolutionize!”

The leader of the Sacred Democratic Country led the charge, and the spirits of both sides finally clashed. It was a surreal sight that would leave its mark on the pages of history—no, mythology.

* * *

- Sub Guild Master…

“What?” I[2] asked.

- How did you…

“How do I… No…” I trailed off.

-…

“The Daughter of Revolution has been enlightened by herself, Chosen Warrior of the Holy Spear. You should not doubt the intentions of the light,” I explained.

- Crazy bastard…

---

1. Alex’s POV ☜

2. Lee Ki-Young’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 820
THE LAST (53)

“The Chosen Warrior of the Holy Spear has denied the will of the Son of Light and is going to—”

- Stop it.

“…”

“…”

“Thus, the living and the dead…”

- I said stop it. I’m being serious. Stop.

“…”

-…

“Okay,” I said.

- Do you really have to behave that way in a situation like this?

“I’m just saying it because I’m happy. How can I stay still after seeing this?” I questioned.

- You’re being annoying. While we’re on the subject, please refrain from talking that way. I feel more anxious than angry.

“Why are you anxious?” I asked.

- It feels like you’re changing.

“What?”

- It feels like you're changing. I feel embarrassed and humiliated for saying this, but it makes me nervous. I'm only saying it because I don't know your situation there, but I sometimes have silly thoughts about you actually turning into a god. Won't your personality disappear by staying there for a long time?

"That won't happen," I reassured her.

- I'm asking just in case. Haven't you thought of the possibility of problems occurring when you descend because these people really consider you a god? What about the possibility of the will of the continent not allowing it? If a being up there isn't allowed to descend here, then our plan will be affected negatively. After all, everyone on the continent considers you an object of faith.

"That's…"

- I'm telling you that it doesn't hurt to be careful. Maybe I'm just saying this because I don't know anything, but… in the end, it's not going to be easy. Of course, the fact that I'm annoyed is the biggest reason, but… if possible, please stop what you're doing.

Jo Hye-Jin looked at the Sacred Democratic Country with a truly anxious face.

'She's making me think about useless things… '

However, I could understand why she was feeling that way. I was at a loss for words when I saw the spirits of the empire and the spirits of the Sacred Democratic Country creating a scene straight out of a myth.

I was sure the name, "The Continent Where the Son of Light Was Sacrificed," and the details of the "Following in the Footsteps of the Son of Light' event had amplified that anxiety inside of her.

What if the continent turned Lee Ki-Young into a god?

What if the transcendental system needed Lee Ki-Young? Jo Hye-Jin was worried about that. Now that I thought about it, she seemed really relieved when I treated her like usual upon giving her the holy spear.

'I wonder if Hyun-Sung feels the same way.'

Today was the first time it crossed my mind, but it was possible that he was worried about my personality disappearing soon enough. He was afraid that I would become a different being because I was no longer human, afraid that I would be very different from before. He might even be thinking that the continent was stopping me from descending.

'I haven't thought about that.'

I was sure he was worried and that could be the reason behind his strange behavior. I thought it would be good to talk it out with him like I was doing with Jo Hye-Jin, but I needed to think about this more because teasing her was my top priority.

"*Aww*, was our Hye-Jin worried?" I teased.

- Shut up.

"*Aww*, were you worried about me? I'm really happy. Ki-Young is very happy," I added.

- Shut up! This is why I didn't want to tell you…

"You sure worry about a lot of things, Hye-Jin…" I commented.

-…

"Our Hye-Jin…"

- Shut up, you bastard! Shut up! Shut up! Seriously, just stop it! Stop! Stop!

"O-O-Okay," I stuttered.

- Don't make me angry. Please stop…

Jo Hye-Jin's cheeks had turned red, so she was obviously embarrassed. This was my first time seeing her like this. She seemed to be regretting it a lot, regretting that she said something stupid.

She was definitely thinking that she shouldn't have said anything.

As expected, she quickly changed the subject.

- Sub Guild Master… did you…

“Yes?” I asked.

- Did you expect this to happen?

It was a continuation of the question she had asked me earlier. It seemed that she really wanted to change the subject.

“Yes, I expected,” I replied.

-…

“I expected our Hye-Jin to worry about me…” I added.

- Damn it! You bastard! I told you to stop!

“Okay. I’ll stop, so don’t throw away your spear. I won’t do it anymore,” I told her.

- I'm not going to forgive you if you do it again.

“I got it. Well, I honestly didn’t expect this to happen. I didn’t know how this event was going to play out or what the answer was,” I told her.

-…

“Don’t worry. I *really* won’t do it,” I reassured her.

-…

“I believe there are many paths. They can hunt the named monster or convince the spirits of the empire. There could also be a way I haven’t thought of at all. Aris—I mean, Oscar was the one who made the decision, not me.

"Of course, I feel like it’s too early to celebrate, as we've yet to win, but I believe that she had made the right choice,” I explained.

- Are you saying Miss Aris has the ability to awaken the spirits of the empire?

“I’m not sure, but it’s highly likely. I don’t think this is what Ji-Hye noona actually

wanted, though…" I answered.

- Then Miss Aris…

"It's kind of hard to explain because I don't even know how this is possible," I told her.

I didn't want to say this, but a miracle was the only way to describe this situation.

I looked at Aris' status window and saw that she did not unlock any special ability; she also didn't grow as an adventurer and obtained the ability to summon the spirits of the empire. If I had to explain it, I'd say that the holy spear had bestowed power upon her when she grabbed it and shouted. Actually, it was the most convincing hypothesis.

--- Revolutionize! Comrades! Revolutionize!

"Let's raise our flag of war here once again!" Oscar shouted.

Otherwise, then it could simply be that those spirits wanted to lend Aris a hand.

Things that go beyond common sense happened pretty often on the continent, so saying that it was a miracle just like the denizens of the Sacred Democratic Country who were fighting down there might make it easier to understand.

- It's interesting thinking that this sight might actually be a miracle… I'm feeling kind of overwhelmed.

"…"

- I even think that you might actually be able to come back. I don't know about everything else, but I sincerely hope you return. That's what we're fighting for.

"…"

- So what should we do now? Laios? Or… the Federation…

"I'm not sure," I replied.

I looked away and saw the others in their respective spots.

Kim Hyun-Sung had decided to head to the North.

Even though he seemed a bit hesitant, I saw him spreading his wings.

'Will he be able to handle this?'

He seemed unsure of himself, and it looked like he was trembling.

- I think there's going to be a fight in the Federation. I don't think Miss Cha Hee-Ra will need help, but… providing support…

"That doesn't sound like a bad idea," I commented.

- Or what do you think about Laios?

"Laios…" I mumbled.

I looked away from Jo Hye-Jin and saw Jung Ha-Yan, Han Sora, and Park Deok-Gu. Of course, I saw Laios as well.

The scene was familiar, as it was the same at the time. I saw priests praying and people being evacuated. Pristina greeted Jung Ha-Yan nervously, and she looked at Jung Ha-Yan as if she was ashamed.

- T-Thank you for visiting Laios again. Miss Jung Ha-Yan… Mr. Park Deok-Gu, and… Miss Han Sora.

- It's been a while, Miss Pristina.

- I wanted to meet all of you again under better circumstances… I feel bad that I can't give you a proper welcome because of the ongoing situation here. I had no choice but to ask for your assistance again…

- Hey, don't worry about it too much. If that thing falls, Laios won't be the only nation that will be in danger. The fate of the entire continent is at stake… and following Hyung-nim's footsteps again is something we must do.

- But…

- Hey, don't feel bad! To be honest, finding the key to the dungeon has greater

meaning than protecting Laios. I feel bad because it sounds kind of selfish, but this quest is that important to us… We should actually be asking for your cooperation, Miss Pristina.

- Thank you for being considerate, Mr. Park Deok-Gu. I really have nothing to say other than thank you. In my name, I promise once again to the heroes of Laios that our kingdom…

- In that case, I-I… have a request…

- Sure, Miss Jung Ha-Yan! Please tell me your request.

- T-The temple of the God of Magic…

- Excuse me?

- Would it be okay if I told her, Miss Jung Ha-Yan?

- *Ah*, yeah. You do it, Sora.

- I'll speak in her place, Miss Pristina. So… Miss Jung Ha-Yan would like to build a Magic Tower here. It would be a large magic tower that's like a temple, and it'll be a new type of research institute centered around the mages who believe and follow Miss Jung Ha-Yan. A testing model was already created in Lindel. She was satisfied with its success, so she wanted to build a second Magic Tower in Laios.

- *Ah…*

- Since we don't need financial support, we would like to ask you to provide the land…

- O-Of course, I'll provide the land! I should be the one asking you that, Miss Jung Ha-Yan.

- I-In that case, I'll consider this as you agreeing with our condition…

- We promise to support you at all costs. Laios will provide you with any support you need.

- That's enough for the greeting… I think it's best if we start heading out…

Park Deok-Gu's worried face seemed more noticeable than Jung Ha-Yan's smile. His face didn't change as they exchanged the conversation. I hadn't seen his serious face in a while.

When Pristina was no longer in sight, he finally started talking.

- Hey, I'm feeling pretty nervous.

-…

- Hyung-nim was with us back then. Of course, I know you've grown a lot since then, but still… being here without him and thinking about stopping that thing makes me feel a bit uncomfortable and nervous. Don't you agree, Sora?

- *Huh*? I-I kind of feel the same way.

- Looks like there's a battle going on in the Democratic Country. Just like we expected, this dungeon is just following Hyung-nim's footsteps. The spirits of the old empire… I am hopeless in clearing dungeons, but I have a feeling that there might be something in this place as well. If I'm right, it's probably here.

- W-What's here?

- The mastermind behind that clump of mana above us.

- *Ah…* I see…

- The villain who had summoned a great demon lord. The demon summoner… of the Republic. There's a high chance that he's related to clearing Laios. No, I-I'm definitely sure of it.

'Seems plausible.'

Normally, I'd ignore his deduction, but it made sense, so I pondered hard and long about it.

I suddenly recalled the notorious scum who had driven Laios and the Sacred Democratic Country into a corner. He had tried to raze Laios to the ground for his own ambitions.

“Demon Summoner Jin Cheong…” I mumbled. His name was already considered taboo on the continent, but I had no choice but to utter his name once again.

CHAPTER 821
THE LAST (54)

I couldn’t say that it wasn't possible because the war with the Republic happened immediately after the Laios incident. In other words, it wouldn’t make sense to take out Jin Cheong from the equation. Basically, he was like a named monster or…

‘He could appear like an NPC or something.’

I was sure Ji-Hye noona didn’t plan these events to follow my exact footsteps. If she wanted to show how much I had sacrificed for the continent, then there was only one individual who would show up as Laios’ named monster.

The Son of Light’s illusion wouldn't be here.

The named monster of the Sacred Democratic Country’s revolution, which was the main event, would be the revolutionary version of Lee Ki-Young.

The named monster in the Federation, where Hee-Ra noona was located at the moment, would be Doom Ki-Young and his minions, while the named monster in the North would be the beaten version of Lee Ki-Young.

‘It’d be strange if this was the only place without a version of me.’

It was possible that the named monster had yet to be discovered, and there was also a chance that the named monster would only be unlocked after meeting certain conditions.

The clump of mana above Laios was a massive clue, and it was basically telling everyone that he was somewhere in Laios. Ji-Hye was pretty knowledgeable about Jin Cheong, but the question was how that demon summoner had come here. Even if Ji-Hye noona had gotten the system’s permission and was doing this with Lucifer’s help…

‘It should be impossible.’

Of course, It might be kind of different depending on how it was going to be used, but a full revival was definitely impossible. If she had given him a key role, then she could give them character and transform him into a named monster, but I couldn't tell if that would turn Jin Cheong into an actual demon summoner or simply a demon's puppet.

'I'll think about it later once I see him.'

Nothing was decided yet, after all.

- Are you… talking about Jin Cheong… the demon summoner?

- That's right, and I'm even scared to talk about it. Of course, I've fought many battles, gained experience, and I've grown as I encountered many villains, but… he was the scariest villain I've ever encountered. He had already lost, but he remained steadfast in his claims and screamed desperately about how he wasn't a demon summoner… he even shed tears of blood… I saw madness in those eyes.

- *Ah*, I see.

- It was to the point that I wondered whether a person could really turn out like him if they turned into a demon. You remember, right, Sora? Hyung-nim and noonim… were almost in danger. It's true that I wasn't strong enough back then, but… it's an event I don't want to remember again. He was so merciless that he turned his loyal troops into undead creatures. He's the opposite of hyung-nim.

- R-Right.

- Well, you only understand what you know, but… I know how dangerous that man is, and there were rumors about him causing trouble because he was under a demon's control. Even during peaceful times, his influence is still everywhere, may it be in the form of a clandestine organization or an unknown group of black mages.

- S-Still… we have Miss Jung Ha-Yan.

- Of course. Noonim is reliable, and you've gotten stronger as well, Sora. I'm sure we can overcome this.

Jin Cheong had definitely left an indelible mark on Park Deok-Gu's mind, and I was sure most of the humans on the continent were thinking the same thing as him. It

wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that he was the beginning and the end of the continent's threat.

That was probably why Park Deok-Gu looked more serious than usual.

- But… noonim.

-…

- Why isn’t that falling?

- I-I’m not sure… I-It doesn’t matter whether it falls or not because I’m going to disassemble it, anyway.

-…

- I-I need to destroy it before it falls. I’m going to… d-disassemble it now.

- Is that… possible?

‘She really is amazing.’

Park Deok-Gu looked at Jung Ha-Yan in disbelief, and I was also kind of shocked.

‘Disassemble it before it falls?’

- I-It’s nothing but a ball of mana…

I wonder if Ji-Hye noona had seen this. Jung Ha-Yan’s mana seemed to be limitless, and it was to the point that it was better to ask what she couldn’t do rather than what she could do.

‘This is why people believe you’re the God of Magic.’

If I were a mage, I would’ve thought of Jung Ha-Yan as a god.

Han Sora started drawing a magic circle, and I could see that she was stacking several different spells so that Laios wouldn't be affected once Jung Ha-Yan started disassembling the clump of mana.

I was so impressed by how calm Jung Ha-Yan looked that I questioned whether Laios was really in a dangerous situation or not. In addition, Han Sora walked outside real quick and placed a mat on the ground.

Seeing that she was taking things out from the picnic basket, she had to be preparing food. Long ago, Jung Ha-Yan would never lift a finger to help Han Sora, but today, Jung Ha-Yan had to have felt bad because she started helping Han Sora.

- You can stay still. Miss Jung Ha-Yan, right now…

- I-It's okay. I'll help as well.

Honestly, she wasn't very helpful; all she did was fix the edges of the mat or brush off the dust, but it seemed to be effective because Han Sora looked kind of touched. Park Deok-Gu wasn't surprised by the sudden change in the atmosphere; he had always been the type of person to adapt quickly, after all.

Once Jung Ha-Yan was done eating and drinking her tea, Han Sora was finally done drawing the magic circle. Jung Ha-Yan stood up and did a test run.

'She's casting a spell.'

I wasn't sure when she had channeled that spell, but it was probably as soon as she arrived in Laios. As expected, it didn't take long for strong winds to blow around Jung Ha-Yan.

Park Deok-Gu realized what was going on and held up his shield, putting his guard up. He had definitely recalled what happened long ago.

At the time, Jung Ha-Yan and I were busy stopping the falling clump of mana, while Park Deok-Gu and Han Sora were busy fighting Jin Cheong's demons.

Of course, the current situation was different from the situation at the time. I saw Jung Ha-Yan, Han Sora, Park Deok-Gu, soldiers of Laios, and adventurers standing around the three. The mages from the Magic Tower, the guilds, and the clans that had come here were preparing for an unexpected change in the situation.

Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora looked calm, but those who had been forced to come here looked nervous. Of course, the old mages looked at Jung Ha-Yan as if they trusted their *granddaughter*, but others looked frightened because they knew that if that ball

in the sky blew up, they'd disappear without a trace.

I couldn't blame them for feeling that way. Soldiers closed their eyes and prayed that the "thing" in the sky wouldn't fall, while others mumbled, saying that Jung Ha-Yan would be able to do what she was about to do.

Once their anxiety reached its peak, Jung Ha-Yan unleashed her spell. Several rays of light were released from her staff, and she had to have thought that showing off was important because the light was extremely dazzling.

Even Han Sora's jaw dropped at the sight.

- *Hyaaaah!*

Jung Ha-Yan shouted, but it was obviously for the public.

Han Sora rummaged through her bag. My anxiety thinned out because I thought she was preparing the new promotional pamphlet of the God of Magic she had made a few days ago, but Han Sora's expression soon changed.

- *Huh?*

Jung Ha-Yan seemed to be questioning herself.

Han Sora realized that something was wrong because she started talking to her.

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan?

- I-I don't think my spell is working.

- What?

- I don't think my spell is working…

- That's…

- T-that must not be just mana. Perhaps… this isn't what we're supposed to do.

-…

- *Uh…*

- Wait, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. Let me look into it. *Ah*, Lian… I mean, Miss Park Lian. The situation there… Yes… Okay. Okay, got it.

'So it's that.'

Han Sora had discovered its identity as well. If that clump of what looked like mana were from an ordinary spell or were simply mana, Jung Ha-Yan would be able to disassemble it with no issues whatsoever.

Han Sora proceeded to contact many people, so I was sure she knew why this was happening. I was sure she'd be able to come up with a conclusion soon—probably…

- It's the system, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. Since it's a Forced Event or Quest for the dungeon, there must be a process to clear it. I think it's under the system's protection. The people from the Magic Tower will take care of this place for now, so we should find another way…

- *Ah…*

- You don't have to be disappointed, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. There are going to be other chances. A quest prompt had already popped up in the Sacred Democratic Country, but it hasn't appeared here yet, so I'm sure we need to trigger it by meeting certain conditions, so…

- I'm sure it's that bastard! That demon summoner is somewhere around here! I'm sure we have to find him first, noonim.

- R-R-Right.

The crowd started looking around Laios. They seemed to be looking for clues rather than the demon summoner. It was kind of strange how Anemone's Eye was flying around, struggling to find its target, but it was undeniably effective.

- Look over there. The cave! That demon might be inside that cave!

- It might not be the demon summoner, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. Don't you think it'd be better if you talked to Miss Pristina?

- I’m sure he’s inside the cave. We have to go there. It’s the same cave where he summoned the demons. It’s where we first met…

- N-N-No. W-When we first met… it was…

Jung Ha-Yan grabbed the hands of Han Sora and Park Deok-Gu before casting a spell.

The three of them vanished into thin air.

Park Deok-Gu and Han Sora looked around with a confused look.

- I-It’s this place.

- Right… I remember. It started here…

- I-I can’t see, Sora.

- What? Then is it really…

- Yeah, I can’t see this place using Anemone’s Eye. I-It looks like we need to go inside.

- Is it okay to go in without being prepared?

- W-We just need to kill him. Just bash his head.

Park Deok-Gu entered without hesitation, so Jung Ha-Yan had no choice but to enter while channeling a spell, but…

‘I’m getting nervous… Something feels off… ’

I knew it…

[Demon Summoner—a main event of the Mythic-rank dungeon, "The Continent Where the Son of Light Was Sacrificed" will soon begin.]

—…

‘This… is the worst… ’

—…

'It really is... the worst... '

This was the worst-case scenario out of all the scenarios I had imagined.

— How about… we play a simple game?

I saw the demon summoner looking to the front while sitting on a table.

CHAPTER 822
THE LAST (55)

'So this is how you're going to be, huh?'

I was so anxious that I started tapping my thigh. I knew it was going to be pretty difficult, but it seemed that it was going to be more difficult than I thought.

'This is too difficult.'

I couldn't help but take a good look at the demon summoner. It had been a while since we last saw each other.

This was a reenactment of our first meeting.

The only word I could use to describe the way Jin Cheong looked at Jung Ha-Yan and Park Deok-Gu was arrogance. Despite not showing his intentions, he seemed confident in his abilities. He was just that type of person. He'd show off without any doubts in his decisions.

Ji-Hye and Jin Cheong were the same but different. He never showed any weaknesses, nor would he show a weak side. His arrogance was perfect for his abilities, and he didn't bother hiding it.

'I can't really say that he's bluffing.'

Jin Cheong had never exaggerated himself and was actually the type that despised bluffing. Anyway, the best way to describe him was that he was wearing his heart on his sleeve. His genius was different from Kim Hyun-Sung, Cha Hee-Ra, and Jung Ha-Yan.

I was sure he had always been a chosen one both on Earth and on the continent.

'I get annoyed for no reason whenever I see guys like him.'

The three put their guards up as they entered the building. Park Deok-Gu held his

shield up and got ready to attack. Jung Ha-Yan cast her spell, but it wasn't really working, as Jin Cheong was under the system's protection.

This Forced Quest couldn’t be cleared through brute force.

It was probably… *that* type of quest. Han Sora seemed to have already seen through what was going on because she grabbed Jung Ha-Yan’s hand quietly.

Park Deok-Gu, who was trying to figure out what was going on, quietly put his shield down and stared at Jin Cheong.

- What… in the world…

- I think it’s a Forced Event. It’s a type that cannot be cleared with magic or physical methods… Winning that game is probably the only way to resolve Laios’ issue, but I don’t know what kind of game it is…

- I-I-I watched Oppa play it…

- I think I remember it as well… A-Anyway, what do we need to do now?

— It’s a game.

-…

-…

-…

— Just think of it as a simple game. It might be a bit more complicated than chess or janggi[1]… *Ah*, have you heard of this type of game before?

- Of course not.

There was a large board on the table, and there were dozens of janggi pieces like when we played it. The only difference was the map. The map at the time seemed to have been randomly generated, but the map this time looked strikingly similar to the continent. Basically, it looked like a smaller version of the continent. The battlefield centered around Laios and the Republic reminded me of the…

'...Republic War.'

It made me recall the war that would start after this event.

The board looked like Laios, and there was a massive clump of mana floating above it.

I saw pieces in the place where the final battle had taken place.

Among the pieces were Jung Ha-Yan, Park Deok-Gu, and even Kim Hyun-Sung. The pieces were designed with great detail, and I saw the army, mages, knights, and assassins. There were also many troops along with clans and guilds.

'The Republic is part of our formation for now.'

Obviously, there wasn't going to be a separate linked quest.

Honestly, I knew it the moment I first saw him and the board on the table. The special event had started, and the demon summoner had grouped the demon summoning incident and the Republic War into one. That was probably what was going on here.

— I don't really think that I need to explain the basic rules. This is the smaller version of the war, and it's a war game where the sides are split into two; two players fight each other for supremacy. There's one more thing I need to explain…

-…

— The danger is real.

- You mean…

— These small pieces are actually alive.

- What do you…

— I'm telling you that losing a piece means that the person being represented by that piece will lose their life in real life.

- Y-You're crazy…

— If you end up losing, the clump of mana above Laios will also fall on Laios. Beating me is the point of this event, and there are no other ways to clear it. I swear on my name, but I haven't lied about a single thing so far.

- Hey, how can we trust a demon summoner…

—…

'I knew something like this was going to happen.'

It was at the highest difficulty, and there was a lot on the line.

Honestly, it was absurd, and I wasn't sure if I could even beat him myself.

'Was this even supposed to be cleared?''

Of course, it was supposed to be cleared. There were no doubts about that, as the demon summoner himself had explained how to clear the event. The way to clear it was really simple, and if they managed to beat Jin Cheong, it would be the end.

The quest was basically telling them to beat the boss because there was a boss. The problem was that Jin Cheong was like Kim Hyun-Sung when it came to games like this, and he was the boss that they had to face.

Park Deok-Gu, Jung Ha-Yan, and Han Sora weren't commanders in the first place, and they had never controlled a large group of soldiers.

Even if a team of commanders on the continent came here to play, there was no guarantee that they'd be able to take any of Jin Cheong's pieces. Of course, it wasn't because they were incompetent… it was more like Jin Cheong was beyond competent.

The first thing I thought of was employing tactics against Jin Cheong.

'Just lose intentionally.'

It was a petty trick of playing the game with the mindset of giving up.

We would have been able to play defensively if only the pieces of the losing side wouldn't actually lose their lives in real life.

I considered preserving only the most important pieces of the game and abandoning Laios, as I was convinced that we'd still be able to clear the entire dungeon with minimal damage, even without Laois.

In other words, it might be better to abandon the troops here and Laios rather than resisting and losing every single piece in the end.

I was happy because it felt like Ji-Hye noona had provided a way out for us, but it wouldn't be easy to take that way out, as the demon summoner wouldn't let that happen under his watch.

- W-What… should we do?

- I-I can't… make a decision right away. Mr. Jin Cheong… would it be okay if I asked you a few questions?

— Go ahead.

- If we lose, what will happen to the player?

— Nothing will happen to the player.

- If we refuse to play this game…

— There isn't an option not to play this game.

- Are there any other rules we should be aware of?

— No. If you don't trust me, I'm willing to provide you with the rulebook.

- Is only one player allowed?

— There can be as many players as you want.

- Can we change players while playing the game? Or if one of us plays…

— Someone else can come and play the game, but the size of the clump of mana above Laios grows as time passes without any players. And it's going to start… now.

I was relieved to see Han Sora gathering information by herself. Since Jin Cheong

couldn’t be stopped physically, there was nothing Jung Ha-Yan could do.

As for Park Deok-Gu…

- Aren’t we in big trouble? T-that clump of mana is going to grow bigger like a snowball! S-Shouldn’t we be playing the game? I think we should start now…

- But… that’s…

- Hey, someone has to play. We should contact someone… or I can temporarily play the game since he said that we can change players! I think it’s best if we do that for now!

‘Stop talking bullshit, man.’

- Wait.

- No, we really don’t have any other choice. The only way to stop that demon summoner… If there’s no other way, then I…

‘That pig.’

—…

- Can you think of a way out of this, noonim?

- I’m trying to find a way.

- Since we’re already here…

- Wait! Hold on, Mr. Park Deok-Gu!

- We don’t have time for this!

- S-Sora said to wait.

- Calm down. We still have some time. *Um*… Miss Jung Ha-Yan. Can you see just how huge that clump of mana will become and when it's going to explode?

- A-About one hour?

- Thank you. We still have about an hour for now, so we're not the ones who have to start the game. We'll have a better chance if we ask the field commanders of the continent. I think it's best if we contact Miss Kim Mi-Young or someone else in the guild… I-Is that okay with you, Miss Jung Ha-Yan?

- I-I'll leave it up to you, Sora.

- Thank you.

'I'm so glad Han Sora is there.'

Every time there was a crisis, Han Sora would always step up to save the continent, but this was the first time she had saved the continent using this kind of method.

I felt extremely stressed just imagining Park Deok-Gu playing against Jin Cheong by himself. He had been studying tactics, and he was surprisingly talented at it, but putting Park Deok-Gu on this stage was no different from suicide. He'd throw all named adventurers on the entire continent into hell, and he wouldn't be able to employ any tactics—not against Jin Cheong.

Fortunately, Han Sora was here, and their reaction wasn't so bad. They realized that this was beyond their ability; they realized it the moment Han Sora asked the demon summoners a few questions.

'This was a trap.'

"Wait… is this bastard… really an NPC?" I questioned.

At a glance, he looked like someone Ji-Hye noona had created, but he hadn't been giving any useless information, so I couldn't help but question whether he had a mind of his own or not.

If Han Sora hadn't asked him questions, we wouldn't have known the fact that we could change players, that we don't have to start the game right away, and that the result of the game wouldn't affect the player in any way.

I wasn't sure if he was required to answer questions, but…

'It probably means he has some free will, right? What about his memories? Does he still have them?'

- Wait, I have one more question. Are you Jin Cheong himself?

— I will not answer that question.

'Bastard.'

- Are you the demon summoner? Are you the same evil Jin Cheong who had made the continent tremble in fear?!

— I will not answer that question.

- Then who are you?

— Just think of me as a dungeon event monster.

Jin Cheong's expression was solemn, and I saw him sitting calmly while formally. He seemed like he was looking down on them and analyzing them at the same time.

One thing I was sure of was that he was different from the other spirits. He had to have decided to take on a different role, but he was on a different level compared to the spirits in the Sacred Democratic Country.

Anyway, I had to say something because we had no other choice.

"Hye-Jin, let's get ready."

- For what?

"Get ready to show the power of friendship. You haven't lost your touch, right?" I asked.

---

1. Janggi, sometimes called Korean chess, is a strategy board game popular on the Korean Peninsula. The game was derived from xiangqi, and is very similar to it, including the starting position of some of the pieces, and the 9×10 gameboard, but without the xiangqi "river" dividing the board horizontally in the middle. ☜

CHAPTER 823
THE LAST (56)

- *Whoo…*

“Don’t worry too much, Hye-Jin,” I told her.

- How can I not worry? This isn’t a simple game. This is…

“I mean… it’s no different from a war. Why are you acting like you’ve never ordered soldiers before? Responsibility always follows… and this is no different,” I said.

- That’s different from this.

“Oh dear…” I mumbled.

- In the first place, I prefer not to be a field commander in war, so this situation is really uncomfortable to me. Especially when I know that the pieces can die according to my decisions. It’s not something anyone can play with a sane mind. While we’re on the topic… my instincts are rejecting it. Playing with human lives…

‘Look at her trying to come up with a memorable line.’

“But what can you do? You’re the only person I can think of right now,” I said.

‘I mean… I get what she’s saying.’

- *Whoo…*

Jo Hye-Jin still looked dissatisfied. As she said, her instincts *did* seem to be rejecting all this. She seemed more scared about playing a game where people’s lives were on the line rather than feeling pressured about it.

If an actual war broke out, I was sure she wouldn’t be this against it, but…

‘This girl… ’

Psychopath commanders like Jin Cheong and Ji-Hye noona would never be able to understand Jo Hye-Jin.

'I'm the only one who understands you, but you're right. How can you play a game by using humans as chess pieces? What kind of a lunatic had come up with this idea?'

Naturally, I felt happy that Jo Hye-Jin was like me, which was the reason we got along so well. If I had the choice, I wouldn't have dispatched her to deal with this painful and uncomfortable situation, but she was the only suitable person I could think of right now.

I thought about sending Song Soo-Kyung, but he had things to take care of while Jung Ha-Yan was here, so he was out.

Kim Hyun-Sung was busy in the North as well.

More importantly…

'This suits Jo Hye-Jin… '

It was a fight that had to be fought while expecting to lose.

I was sure she wouldn't play the game with the intention of losing, but she was definitely going to preserve the troops as much as possible, which was great, just in case. Of course, I highly valued her abilities, and I was sure she'd play this game more carefully than anyone else.

Jo Hye-Jin nodded slowly and started walking.

What awaited her was Park Deok-Gu and Han Sora's happy faces.

- Hey… you're finally here!

—…

"Obviously, you need to hide the fact that you can talk to me," I reminded.

Jo Hye-Jin didn't say anything, but I was sure she was listening.

— Please let me know when you're ready.

'The way he's pretending to be so relaxed is so disgusting.'

- Hey, noonim. Ha-Yan noonim told you the details, right?

- Miss Jo Hye-Jin.

- Yes, I heard the gist of it. The information that Miss Sora had organized was really helpful.

The others stood around Jo Hye-Jin.

— So it's you…

- Think of me as someone who has the final say. I heard we can play this as a group…

— Yes, it doesn't matter.

- I have a few requests.

— I'll consider them.

- I need time to figure out the troops and the rules, as there isn't enough information for us to know what's going on. I need to know the details of what the troops can do such as their stats, number of supplies, and whether they can be affected by morale or not.

- Unlike us, you obviously know everything about this game, so if we proceed with the game just like that, then it would be…

— I accept.

- I'm asking you to stop the expansion of the mana that's floating above Laios.

—…

-…

— Okay, I'll do that.

- Also, I ask that you provide a minimum amount of information regarding the troops

that you're going to manage.

It was reasonable to ask for a minimum amount of information, as he knew about the troops on our side. Of course, there was a possibility that he had no idea about our troops' formation, but it was unlikely. Actually, even if he told her that he had no idea, it was impossible to trust his words, as he was a soldier of the Republic.

- I ask that you provide us with as much information as you have about our troops. Where are the enemy troops, and where do I need to fight?

— I think it's best to assume that the rangers on both sides have decided to gather information as if both sides are actually at war.

[A letter from the Black Swan Guild's Information Department has reached the player. The demon summoner's detailed military power and overall important information are displayed.]

- I can't rule out the possibility of you providing false information in the letter you've provided. I'll reject it.

Jin Cheong looked like he was having fun.

— There's no false information. Think of it as a device for entertainment purposes. Also… would you like to have some tea?

It was absurd how he was trying to be friendly with her. It was funny seeing him act that way despite the fact that he could just be a simple program, but if he was a well-made program, then it was understandable that he'd do something like that.

Basically, Jin Cheong enjoyed showing kindness to those who were competent, and he particularly liked those who were smart.

He had tested me right away after hearing rumors about my genius, so there was a high chance that he felt a sense of belonging with those he considered elites.

Of course, Jin Cheong's mindset wasn't that shallow. The *sense of belonging* was based on the thought that he was above others. Now that I thought about it…

'I think it's better to say that this was simply entertainment for him.'

Yeah, that was all. Jin Cheong seemed to be thinking that he had found something fun and that he was going to have a good time.

- I decline.

— That's unfortunate.

Jo Hye-Jin took her time reading the information that the ranger had provided. Of course, she wasn't just standing there. Not only was she storing this information in her mind, but she was also delivering this information to the situation room.

The Blue Guild had a robust command structure.

Hwang Jung-Yeon had a great memory, and it was the same for Miss Kim Mi-Young, who helped in everything except for battles.

Some of the staff in the command group of the Continental Protection Management Committee had transferred over to the Blue Guild as well.

There was a high chance that I was right, especially when I saw the short letter that he had sent. The demon summoner seemed happier than offended as he stared at what Jo Hye-Jin was doing.

- Yes, Miss Kim Mi-Young. I would like the analysis team to compare the forces of both sides.

— You have a lot of doubts.

- I'm just doing what needs to be done.

— Yes, you're right. This process is required.

It was for the sake of a fair game, and it was nothing more than a process to prevent the possibility that his troops were stronger than us. Jin Cheong didn't bother saying anything else, but it seemed that he wanted to comment because he started talking.

— The pieces you have are probably stronger than mine. The special abilities of your special soldiers are probably different from each other, but you may balance them using your resources.

— Basically, my undead soldiers are weak against a group of priests from the Sacred Democratic Country or against the holy knights of the Vatican. The undead do not require supplies, but their equipment is in poor condition. They have to win battles, or their efficiency will decrease, and they'll have to rely more on the black mages.

-…

— The black mages possess strong firepower, but they're easily seen by assassins. The way to defeat them isn't all that different from how they can be defeated in real life. Basically, I may have more troops, but your troops are stronger than mine.

[A letter from the Republic's Tactical Analysis Department has reached the player. The forces of the demon summoner's army and the player's army are analyzed and displayed.]

- Please see if there are any errors, Miss Jung-Yeon. Yes, yes, I got it.

Obviously, there weren't any errors.

Jin Cheong wasn't the type to play around with things.

He was so relaxed that he had put a handicap on himself.

- What about the denizens? My troops and I have to protect the denizens, but you…

— There are people who provide mana to the black mages and the demons. Of course, my pieces won't prioritize protecting them, but they're not all that different from your pieces, especially when you look at the bigger picture. Regarding the named pieces…

- Wait.

"Don't say anything ridiculous, Miss Hye-Jin," I warned her.

- Please don't refer to them as pieces.

"Wait…"

- Please refrain from calling this a game or the people as pieces.

“Why are you even worried about that? What’s wrong with you?” I complained.

— *Hahaha…*

I found it absurd how Jin Cheong was laughing, and he looked like he had figured out what kind of person Jo Hye-Jin was.

“Why not just start off by losing? What good will come out of saying something like that?” I questioned.

— I see.

- A person’s life isn’t some chess piece. The reason I agreed to this nonsense wasn’t so that I'd get along with you. Your trashy values are none of my concern, and I don’t want you to tell me about those dirty thoughts of yours, Demon Summoner.

— What are you going to do if I decline?

- I’m. Making. A. Request.

— I’ll give you an important tip. Your thoughts will interfere with this quest, and I’m sure you know that better than anyone. In a way, you need to have discipline to determine which troops you’ll abandon as well as which troops you’ll save.

The commander has to know when and who they should sacrifice. Don't you think that decision is going to be easier because we're playing a game?

-…

— If you win, no one will die. Isn’t that right? If you think of it as a game…

“Tell him that has no sense of honor,” I ordered.

- Shut up, you bastard with no sense of honor.

—…

- These people are risking their lives against their will. If you have even an ounce of honor left… if you used to be a true soldier of the Republic, I suggest you respect them even if they’re chess pieces.

—…

It seemed that Jo Hye-Jin's words managed to hurt our Cheong.

— This… You got me there. I accept.

-…

— What do you think? I'm starting to get bored… How about we start the quest? I think I gave you enough to think about this…

-…

— *Ah!* There's one thing I forgot to mention earlier… It's regarding the named figures. I think it'll be better if you saw it yourself… rather than me explaining it.

Jo Hye-Jin checked out the information herself as if she couldn't trust the words of the man who had zero honor. I saw the pieces manifesting within his formation.

"…"

The ridiculous part was that I had seen those faces before. I saw Mikhail and the members of the demonic organization. I also saw Demonic Spy Lee Seol-Ho, Demon Worshiper Ito Sota, and Psychopathic Murderer Jung Jin-Ho among the troops.

"I know those faces," I said.

Jin Cheong spoke to Jo Hye-Jin.

— Now… let's go to war.

CHAPTER 824
THE LAST (57)

I expected Jin Cheong to have something up his sleeve for the sake of game balancing. After all, our troops were more powerful than his troops. We had dozens of named adventurers, including Kim Hyun-Sung and Jung Ha-Yan, but…

'He has nothing.'

Even he wouldn't be able to defeat Kim Hyun-Sung with the undead alone.

It seemed that he had no idea that those bastards were the ones capable of suppressing our regressor. It wasn't just them. I saw villains whose names I could no longer remember. There was a high black mage standing at the helm of the black mages. Fortunately, I was sure that he was dead.

The high black mage might be a victim of Kim Hyun-Sung's killing spree against the black mages. There could also be a high chance that he was a villain who had met his end at the hands of the Vatican's holy knights.

Regardless, the most important thing here was that he had cards to fight our named adventurers. Still…

"Isn't this too difficult? That coward," I commented.

Of course, I couldn't criticize him for being a coward since we had Kim Hyun-Sung, Cha Hee-Ra, and Jung Ha-Yan, but this was too much. Lee Seol-Ho and Mikhail were exceptions, as they wouldn't participate in battles.

They were commanders or administrative staffers capable of supporting this war from behind the scenes by managing the troops.

Actually, I couldn't call them "exceptions," as their abilities were beyond their potential.

It would be easier to understand if we used Ito Sota as an example. This was just an

assumption of mine, but what I was seeing right now had to be the version of these villains if they hadn't died and had gotten the chance to become even stronger.

Before Ito Sota died by drowning in holy water, I remember he had a really high Movement Speed, but it wasn't just the result of his movement technique. He had a ton of points in Agility as well.

I couldn't really remember, but the Epic-rank Wind Blade he possessed at the time became a Legendary-rank weapon; the related special stats had increased as well. True to his title—Wind of Celia—he was a swordsman who took full advantage of the wind.

He had also advanced to a five-star character and was surrounded by a black, sinister wind as if showing off his Demon Worshiper title.

'It's a good thing that we managed to get rid of him so quickly. If he had gotten into a contract with a demon and kicked up a fuss, it would have been really bad… '

I had no idea what to say seeing him being shrouded by a black, sinister wind. It seemed like his low Endurance was no longer an issue. A peak swordsman would always look pretty cool while using his techniques, so I wanted to see him use the sword.

However, the bastard near him didn't look as cool as him.

'The leader of the Murder Brigade in our first lives.'

Jung Jin-Ho. I wasn't sure why the guy who got killed in the tutorial dungeon became a chess piece, but I had a strong feeling that he was here to become Kim Hyun-Sung's greatest opponent.

'I don't remember his growth limit being this high.'

He showed strength beyond his limits, even in his first life, so he had either overcome the system's limits this time or had received demonic powers. He was a magic swordsman, so his Magic stat was pretty high. Overall, he was well balanced.

I was impressed when he started drawing a magic circle using his swords. He looked like an enchantment-type swordsman, but I got a strong feeling that he could become a psychopathic murderer anytime.

'At this rate, I think he can even cast large-scale destruction magic.'

To make things worse, he could use Teleport. The spell that I thought was exclusive to Jung Ha-Yan was in his status window, which was really shocking to me.

Of course, he could only cast the spell on himself, and he could only cover a short distance away, but the fact that he had that skill annoyed me.

I saw many spells that used blood or a medium, so it was already a given that he was going to be really efficient on the battlefield. He might slaughter more civilians than us.

I saw his minions as well, Ki-Chul and Jae-Jun, who died with him in the tutorial dungeon. Russian Park Deok-Gu, the soldiers, and the officers following Jin Cheong were there as well. It was a pretty fancy squad. overall.

Demon Summoner Jin Cheong had managed to gather everyone involved with a demon, and he revealed a diabolical smile as he placed his demonic hand on the miniature version of the continent. Jo Hye-Jin nervously mustered her mana.

The pieces that looked like they were going to sit still finally started moving.

-…

'Did Ji-Hye noona create this by improving the dummy world? Is this like the Dummy World Expansion Pack: The Republic War or something?'

I saw a few restrictions, but it really looked like the dummy world. The pieces were moving on their own and were having their own thoughts. I could also see them having conversations that I couldn't quite understand.

I couldn't hear them, but they were expressing their opinions.

[Kim Hyun-Sung, the named being of the Human Faction, is nervous. He's trying to communicate, but it cannot be delivered to the player. The opinion of Kim Hyun-Sung, the named being, was not delivered.]

[The command center of the Human Faction is saying they're checking the supplies. It seems that an issue has been found. The two commanders of the Republic and the Sacred Democratic Country have conflicting opinions. Their letters have been sent to

the player.]

[Kim Hyun-Sung, the named being of the Human Faction, is sad and sobbing. He's trying to communicate, but it cannot be delivered to the player. The opinion of Kim Hyun-Sung, the named being, was not delivered.]

'What the hell is wrong with him? Is this a bug?'

[The Red Mercenary Guild of the Human Faction is saying that they need to attack first. If the player doesn't communicate clearly, the Red Mercenary Guild will lead the army.]

"You do realize that you need to stop that, right?" I asked.

— Communicating your thoughts should be enough.

-…

[Cha Hee-Ra of the Red Mercenary Guild has accepted your order. Cha Hee-Ra is waiting for the right opportunity and is arguing that they have to fight as soon as possible. The analysis team of the Black Swan Guild has analyzed the Demon Faction's weakness and has sent it to you. They said that the decision is up to you.]

'This is too systematic.'

The system itself was chaotic because it was changing nonstop in real-time. This had to have been unexpected for Jo Hye-Jin as well because she bit her lips and was probably thinking that she needed time to adapt.

Jin Cheong looked at Jo Hye-Jin with excitement and threw out orders, but I didn't think he genuinely cared about this game. He was probably being considerate of her. Actually, I take that back. It was his greed of wanting to make this game a little more enjoyable since he didn't want to play a boring game.

Internal stability had to be prioritized before anything else.

Jo Hye-Jin, who was so focused that I didn't know whether she was listening to me or not, seemed to be aware of that as well. Seeing that Jin Cheong wasn't moving his troops, his faction had to be having their own issues.

The field commanders had to all be in agreement, and they had to oppress the unexpected actions of the named beings. Jung Jin-Ho, the crazy psychopath, was probably butchering the people providing mana or the low-ranking soldiers.

It was possible that he and Ito Sota were working together to gain power within the group. After all, they had always done things based on their nature.

'Do they even obey the player's orders?'

[The Vatican of the Democratic Country is strongly suggesting that we drive out the demonic power as soon as possible. Father Basel is sending a message to the player.]

Looking at it now…

[Father Basel, a named being, has respected the player's decision, but he says he cannot ignore the frightened denizens. He says you must come up with a way to calm them down. The priests and followers are angry. They're strongly expressing that you can't just leave the demons alone.]

I didn't think they were obeying the orders completely. They respected the player's opinions, but one needed a carrot and a stick to control them.

Jo Hye-Jin and the people in the situation room had to have realized that because they got busy trying to calm down the denizens. Jo Hye-Jin was giving Oscar an order in an effort to take care of the pressing matters.

- I understand. Yes, I acknowledge that.

'Hye-Jin is quick at adapting. She's better than me… '

[Oscar, a named being, has respected the player's opinion and has decided to give a speech. The frightened denizens have calmed down, and the Sacred Democratic Country has become one. Oscar has activated her special skill, Diplomacy, to summon the key members of the Republic and the other nations. Oscar has activated her special skill, Speech, to call on the major guilds and armed forces to become one.]

'Nice, Oscar.'

[The black mages of the Human Faction are trembling in fear and have gone into hiding. They may join the demonic faction later.]

‘So there are side effects like this… ’

The more I thought about it, the more I felt like this was a well-made game.

The feedback regarding orders was quick, and it felt like variables that could be easily missed were all over the place. Controlling those variables was vital in beating this game.

[Delivering supplies to the soldiers of the Human Faction.]

— What do you think?

-…

— You’re not a very fun partner. That’s fine. It’s better than… useless mind wars.

‘You really think she’s listening to anything you’re saying right now?’

Jo Hye-Jin was busy focusing on the game, and she knew that setting up the foundation was the most important to create the environment that she wanted.

‘It’ll be difficult.’

Obviously, it was going to be hard to move the troops the way she wanted them to move because forcing the troops to go on a defensive stance would make the other pieces complain.

The aggressive Red Mercenary Guild and the temples might become disappointed in the player. Moreover, their morale would decrease, as they’d just be stuffed somewhere.

Jo Hye-Jin would also have to resolve the supply issue to last for a long time.

In addition to setting up the allied forces' basic defense strategy, she had to balance the resources in key bases. If she wanted to do that, she had to either build a new castle wall or open up a new supply route. She also had to establish a communication method that would allow groups to move systematically.

Most importantly, she had to create a manual for them as well.

'I'm sure Hye-Jin is aware of all those.'

I didn't need to interfere.

The command team of the Blue Guild just had to write the manual and send it to Jo Hye-Jin. Jo Hye-Jin would review and edit them herself. After taking steps to prevent each other from hearing or seeing each other's strategies, they officially held a meeting.

Jo Hye-Jin looked serious in the middle of the meeting with Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora.

- There's not enough time to control all of them, so I think it's best to prioritize writing up the manual. Yes, I understand. I'll review it. Yes, I'll pull the troops back. I want the foreign affairs team to write up a document that'll be sent to each of the commanders in charge of each front line. Yes.

[The command center has accepted your decisions and has decided to operate the troops defensively. The survival of the main troops is the priority. Except for some of the named beings and troops, everyone has respected the player's wishes.]

"Nice," I commented.

- Securing a stable supply route is important.

However, there was no way she could avoid battles altogether.

[The command center agrees that securing a stable supply route is important. They claim that if the 15th line is recaptured, the supply route will stabilize. Each commander is saying that fighting is absolutely necessary. The Red Mercenary Guild of the Human Faction wants to go to the battlefield. Dispatching the rangers of the Black Swan Guild…]

A fight was inevitable.

[Checking the information of the troops and the named beings of the Demon Faction…

[Magic Swordsman Jung Jin-Ho is the named being responsible for the 15th line.]

“So he already knew,” I said.

[The Human Faction…]

“He knew it would happen…”

[Will dispatch Kim Hyun-Sung, the Sunset Swordsman.]

CHAPTER 825
THE LAST (58)

[Kim Hyun-Sung, the named being, says he'll follow your orders. He said he'll do whatever you ask him. He's trying to communicate, but it cannot be delivered to the player.]

"It's not that bad," I commented.

[The troops of the Human Faction. A battle will take place at the 15th line. The Sunset Swordsman and the Magic Swordsman have recognized each other. The Magic Swordsman is provoking the Sunset Swordsman. The Sunset Swordsman is confused and angry. He releases an outraged scream as he unsheathes his sword.]

'Wait, is this bad?'

[The Magic Swordsman is mocking the Sunset Swordsman. The Magic Swordsman is insulting the Sunset Swordsman. The Magic Swordsman wants to fight. The player of the Demon Faction respects his will.]

'I think this is bad… '

[The battle will begin.]

'What if this really is a bug?'

I thought we ought to complain about this.

I knew Kim Hyun-Sung's mind was weak, but I was surprised that even a chess piece of him was acting the same way as the real him. It was probably just a penalty. It would make sense if one thought of it as having a weaker mind in exchange for being overpowered.

'We're not the only ones with this issue.'

Jin Cheong's named being, Jung Jin-Ho, didn't seem sane either.

Perhaps it would be better to stay quiet and ask for a pause if we found ourselves at a disadvantage. We could just say that we'd discovered a bug as an excuse for the pause. Of course, we could also complain to Jin Cheong, and I was sure he'd accept our argument. It seemed kind of dirty, but I had no choice. The lives of the precious denizens were on the line, so I had to forget about playing fair.

'Okay, let's continue for now. If things get bad, we'll use bugs as an excuse and get back as much as possible.'

While I was thinking about many different possibilities, Jin Cheong and Jo Hye-Jin were busy controlling the pieces on the dummy world because they knew that a lot was on the line in this first battle.

Jo Hye-Jin seemed pretty bold for dispatching Kim Hyun-Sung first, but that wasn't necessarily the case. I was sure it had come from her desire to minimize damage to humanity.

It was true that the 15th line was important for supplies, but there was no reason to send him there.

If we had confirmed that Jung Jin-Ho wasn't there, we could've sent the troops to another line and had them focus there.

The profit margin was small, and efficiency-wise, there was no reason to send him against Jung Jin-Ho. After all, Kim Hyun-Sung was pretty efficient by himself, and he was capable of covering massive distances in no time.

However, Jo Hye-Jin knew that Jung Jin-Ho specialized in spells capable of mass destruction, and her desire to minimize useless sacrifice was what created this battle.

The battle was tiny, but it was really intense.

[The commanders of the Human Faction are claiming that they need more troops. They're requesting reinforcements.]

The soldiers of the human side and the army of the Demon Faction were fighting each other. The mages were casting their spells while the priests were spreading their holy magic. The chess pieces trembled in fear and cried out as they died; the sight I was seeing looked like an actual war.

[Some of the soldiers from the Human Faction are frightened. The priests of the Vatican are singing a song of radiant light. The soldiers have gained courage and are moving forward. They shout that they will not fall to the demons. Despair, a status abnormality, has been removed. They have overcome their fears and are singing songs of victory.]

[The field commanders of the Human Faction are warning you to save holy power. The number of exhausted priests is rising.]

Jo Hye-Jin bit her lips, staring at Kim Hyun-Sung and Jung Jin-Ho clashing swords.

Jo Hye-Jin knew that the Sunset Swordsman wouldn't lose, but she looked worried seeing him fight Jung Jin-Ho.

Jung Jin-Ho strengthened himself using many different spells and was using both magc and sword while fighting Kim Hyun-Sung. To make matters worse, he looked like he was having fun.

I wasn't sure whether he thought he couldn't defeat Kim Hyun-Sung head-on or if he thought he needed to use Suppressor, which was his specialty, but he was using annoying methods to put Kim Hyun-Sung in a difficult situation.

'She picked the wrong battlefield.'

Jung Jin-Ho's actions were effective in restraining Kim Hyun-Sung. He did not stop teleporting across the battlefield. The puddle of blood beneath Kim Hyung-Sung's feet was like a quagmire, binding him down, while the spells flying toward him from somewhere were messing up his senses.

I couldn't tell whether Jung Jin-Ho wanted to have a one-on-one battle with Kim Hyun-Sung or if he simply enjoyed war because he also attacked the nearby soldier.

He would swing at both his enemies and allies, injuring them severely, so Kim Hyun-Sung was having a hard time dealing with him. He was a psychopathic murderer, so he didn't mind using people as shields. Whenever he was at a disadvantage, he would hide behind a wall of humans to make it difficult for Kim Hyung-Sung to track him.

Jung Jin-Ho would swing his sword randomly while laughing like a maniac.

He seemed pretty gentle when I saw him in my memories of the first life as well as in

the tutorial dungeon in our second lives, but he had shown his true colors today as the battle dragged on. In fact, he even started losing himself.

'No, he's different from Hee-Ra noona.'

He wasn't losing himself.

I was sure he was more rational than anyone right now.

Kim Hyun-Sung was definitely not having any fun, but Jung Jin-Ho was different.

Both enemy and allied troops were suffering casualties as the battle dragged on.

[Jung Jin-Ho, the named Magic Swordsman of the Demon Faction, is smiling as if he's enjoying the fight.]

[The troops of the Demon Faction are trembling in fear.]

[Jung Jin-Ho, the named being of the Demon Faction, is swinging his sword while laughing like a lunatic.]

[The troops of the Human Faction are afraid of Jung Jin-Ho. The field commanders are insisting that the Magic Swordsman must be stopped. They say that the battlefield is becoming chaotic. The troops from both factions are confusing each other for allies. The chaotic state is making it difficult to distinguish between allies and enemies. The heat of the battlefield has made all troops go mad.]

'Damn it.'

[Jung Jin-Ho, the Magic Swordsman, is laughing like a lunatic.]

'He's probably thinking that it was a mistake.'

Jin Cheong had to have decided not to hand over this area in the first place.

However, Jo Hye-Jin's nature meant that she was definitely going to be obsessed with this front line. It was a front line she had to secure at all costs, and I finally realized why Jin Cheong had dispatched Jung Jin-Ho here.

"You've realized, right? He's just trying to fight dirty," I told her.

-…

Jin Cheong was really acting like "Jin Cheong" at the moment. He was making Jo Hye-Jin suffer as much damage as possible to eventually bring Kim Hyun-Sung down.

Jin Cheong was trying to gain tiny advantages to eventually grow them into big ones through the snowball method. He was willing to give up some things if it meant he'd gain an advantage elsewhere.

Obviously, Jo Hye-Jin wasn't just going to take a beating like an idiot. She reorganized the troops and immediately dispatched field commanders with high leadership stats to encourage the troops.

[Kim Hyun-Sung, the named Sunset Swordsman, is raising his Sunset Sword.]

[The status abnormalities on the troops of the Human Faction have been removed.]

[Park Deok-Gu, the Shield of Faith, releases a rallying cry.]

[The troops of the Human Faction have rallied. They've raised their flag and are starting to reform their formation.]

- We'll reform the formation. Deliver this message to each field commander.

It wasn't easy, and it was honestly almost impossible to regroup and reorganize in the middle of a chaotic battlefield. Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Deok-Gu had helped awaken the spirits of the troops, but it wouldn't be easy returning things to the way it was before.

I found it interesting how the troops started moving systematically. Personally, I thought Jo Hye-Jin wasn't exactly that great at adapting, but it seemed that I was mistaken. Jo Hye-Jin gave orders to everyone, including squads in bad positions. Of course, the troops moving according to the manual were exceptions.

[The field commanders of the Human Faction are applauding the player's decision.]

[The morale of the Human Faction has increased.]

- The troops will drive out the armies of the Demon Faction. We'll gather the survivors and soldiers who got left behind and reorganize the formation again. We'll

move forward by holding up our shields and maintaining a protection spell. Stay in line and drive out the enemy.

[The Shieldbearers of the Human Faction have raised their shields and are moving forward. The Shield of Faith is cheering—encouraging the troops and saying that they'll win. He has activated his special skill, Influence. All allied troops have decided to trust in the Shield of Faith's encouragement.]

[The allied troops are cheering! The morale of the Demon Faction has decreased.]

— *Hahaha!*

'The way this bastard is laughing is so annoying.'

— This is really fun.

'Fun, my ass. Fuck you.'

At this point, the reason behind Kim Hyun-Sung's presence here finally made sense.

- We'll get rid of Jung Jin-Ho first.

[Kim Hyun-Sung of the Human Faction has agreed with the player's suggestion.]

Kim Hyun-Sung immediately flew toward Jung Jin-Ho and swung his sword.

Jung Jin-Ho moved back, looking disappointed.

[The Demon Faction has sounded the retreat.]

- I won't miss it.

'Short-distance Teleport. Damn, I knew it'd be annoying.'

[The rangers of the Black Swan Guild are saying that it's dangerous to go any further, as the region up ahead is an unknown area.]

[Kim Hyun-Sung is saying that he can complete his mission. He's shouting to give him any task and says that it won't be dangerous for him. He's strongly and desperately saying that he can complete the quest.]

- We won’t move any further.

Jo Hye-Jin mumbled in disappointment.

The allied troops agreed that she had made a reasonable decision. They had won the battle, but they sustained a lot of damage, so Jo Hye-Jin immediately checked the damage.

Jo Hye-Jin received messages about how they just had to continue this momentum and charge at the enemy, as the morale of the allied troops had gone through the roof.

However, stabilizing the front line and securing the supply route was more important than anything else. They needed to keep working on the foundation by building a solid defense line and castle walls to put them at an advantage in the middle of battle.

Basically, this so-called operation was necessary to end the second half of the battle with one shot.

I felt like I was seeing the same Jo Hye-Jin whenever the two of us were playing chess.

She was especially scary whenever she closed herself up to think about her future moves, and it was all because I wouldn't be able to see an opening in her defenses the moment that happened.

Jin Cheong nodded as if he had known that this would happen. He definitely had an idea as to what kind of person Jo Hye-Jin was, and I was sure he'd know her better as time went on.

The two continued the game, and Jin Cheong was analyzing Jo Hye-Jin. The way he tried to figure out her nature while gaining advantages here and there made him look like a snake.

— You look like an upright person.

-…

— It’s not easy finding someone whose nature is so clear… I feel like I’m learning

more and more about you as we fight.

- I don’t want to talk about useless things.

— I understand your intention, but this game isn't suitable for you. As I said before, you can’t obtain anything without sacrificing anything. Even if you live by protecting your beliefs, you’ll only end up losing many things. Think about what you've obtained so far.

- Is that why you had abandoned your honor to grab a demon’s hand?

—…

- I’m not upright, nor am I a righteous person. Have you ever thought about why you lost the Republic War?

—…

- You've lost before the people who lived by believing in their beliefs. Those people are the reason the continent managed to overcome many threats and is still developing as we speak. They’re not easily tempted, and they do not surrender to power.

- Most importantly, they carry the things that they consider valuable with them until they die. The continent is what it is today because of them.

—…

- I don’t understand why you sold your soul to the demon, but… I believe.

‘A demon summoner who has abandoned his honor… Looks like cat got his tongue.’

—…

‘Are you at a loss for words after meeting a truly honorable person?’

- People like you aren’t the ones who'll change the world.

‘Our Hye-Jin is so cool. The people will really fall in love with you.’

Jin Cheong's expression was solemn as he stared quietly at Jo Hye-Jin. He had acknowledged the fact that she had enough experience in life.

- That's… what I believe.

I had to say something.

"Hye-Jin, let's change things up. We're going to kick his ass. He has totally fallen for it!"

CHAPTER 826
THE LAST (59)

It was a simple trick, and it was so simple that it didn’t need any explanation.

It was nothing more than changing players mid-game. It was neither a unique nor bright idea, but if that demon summoner were asked if it was that straightforward, I was sure he'd say no. Who would have expected that a player would change nature—no, would become a completely different person mid-game?

It was even more applicable in a situation like this; at this rate, we'd be susceptible to attacks from behind. If he were an idiot or if he weren't certain about his decisions, I was sure he wouldn’t have resisted, but he had analyzed Jo Hye-Jin.

I was sure he had a process in mind when it came to making decisions—no, he was probably in the middle of making one.

I recall hearing about someone whose life was ruined after falling for a scum’s bluff.

I wasn’t sure whether he was reflecting on that valuable lesson or not, but he was getting to know Jo Hye-Jin. He was reminding himself what kind of person Jo Hye-Jin was, her nature, her beliefs, the way she managed her troops, and his own interpretation of her.

I was sure he was done evaluating her by now, but I was wary of the fact that he was still gathering information about her. Fortunately, all the information he'd gathered would lead him to only one answer.

Why only one answer?

‘It's all because she’s very easy to read.’

There wasn’t another idiot like Hye-Jin. An upright, naive, and tenacious idiot. It was impossible to find someone like Jo Hye–Jin, who had been living an honest life while maintaining her honor and beliefs.

She was like a bamboo that stood tall, and a spear that did not tremble that easily. She had never been the type to hide her true nature and was always willing to push for what she thought was right. She wouldn't kneel to injustice or power and would never back down when it came to the things she valued.

Jo Hye-Jin's personality could be seen from her fighting style and the way she managed her troops. Even if one wanted to find something bad or questionable about her, one wouldn't be able to find anything, as she had none of those in the first place.

As Jo Hye-Jin said earlier, she didn't fit in places like this where all sorts of conspiracies and nauseating events were taking place, and I was sure Jin Cheong knew that better than anyone else.

[The commanders of the Human Faction are saying there's nothing they can do. They're pleading that sometimes you need to abandon the troops. They say that the situation won't get any better even if reinforcements are sent.]

- I won't abandon them.

[The commanders of the Human Faction are praising your courage and justice, but they say that it's a foolish choice. You will end up losing this war at this rate. Everyone has agreed that abandoning Castlerock is the wisest choice. They're trying to convince you that there are no reinforcements that can be sent to Castlerock.]

- I'll send reinforcements.

[The player has sent a quest to Holy Spear Jo Hye-Jin, a named being. Holy Spear Jo Hye-Jin nods and grabs her spear in response. She gathers those who will join her to create an army for a special operation. The troops understand that they might lose their lives after completing their mission. Everyone is saying that it's a foolish choice. Holy Spear Jo Hye-Jin is saying foolish choices are required from time to time.]

'Look at her. Would you think that she's not trustworthy?'

[The denizens have gathered and praised the Holy Spear's courage. Jo Hye-Jin, the named being, shakes her head. She shouts that you don't need courage and that anyone would've made the same choice.]

'Bullshit. No one will do that.'

Dummy Jo Hye-Jin was similar to the real Jo Hye-Jin, which was the best-case scenario here. I noticed Jo Hye-Jin nodding and agreeing to the dummy version of herself.

— Did you know? Your life…

- People are willing to sacrifice their lives for what they value. Anyone would've made the same choice.

— Your death will not resolve anything. Your values will become nothing more than just paperweights upon your death. In the end, no one will remember your values.

- That is not important at all. The most important thing is that I'm not ashamed of myself.

— You can talk about all that nonsense because you've never encountered true evil. The reason you can talk about protecting your values and sacrificing yourself is because you've never seen an evil that's truly nauseating and wicked.

- Just because you failed that way doesn't mean I'll end up following your footsteps. As you said, I might regret it and the things I value may become worthless, but… how did making the opposite decision as mine turn out for you?

—…

- Are you satisfied… with your current self? Are you satisfied after abandoning your values and honor? Apart from the consequences of your actions, are you satisfied with your current self?

—…

Jin Cheong frowned when Jo Hye-Jin pointed out the part that he was most guilty about. His lips moved slightly as if he wanted to continue this debate, but it seemed that he was at a loss for words because he ended up just giving out orders.

What else could he say? He valued honor more than anyone, but he had thrown that on the ground and stomped on it.

He was now repaying for what he had done, so there wasn't anything he could say to Jo Hye-Jin right now.

I was sure he was actually angry, and he might be thinking about proving her wrong with his actions. He might be thinking about saying, “Will you be able to remain calm after seeing true evil? Will you be able to remain as your current self even after being subjected to wicked and dirty tricks?”

As expected, the army of the demon summoner who had abandoned his honor was using a cunning trick against the humans. However, our Hye-Jin wasn’t affected at all.

- We can resolve this issue. It’s possible as long as we join hands.

[The soldiers of the Human Faction have gained a little bit of hope from the player’s words. Oscar has agreed with you. She has activated her special skill, Speech. Park Deok-Gu has activated his special skill, Influence. Ahn Ki-Mo and Kim Ye-Ri of the Blue Guild have decided to activate the combination skill, Continental Influence.]

- We can win.

[The Human Faction gains courage. Songs of victory and hope have pervaded the air. Everyone is saying that they can do it.]

— Doing meaningless things…

“He said… they’re meaningless. It’s a line I would expect from a third-rate villain. Let’s show him the power of courage and hope, Hye-Jin!” I shouted.

Jo Hye-Jin looked as if she wanted to tell me to shut up, but I mumbled, “You need to change soon. Get ready."

[Magic Swordsman Jung Jin-Ho, a named being of the Demon Faction, has encountered Holy Spear Jo Hye-Jin, a named being of the Human Faction.]

[The battle will begin.]

[Magic Swordsman Jung Jin-Ho is ridiculing Holy Spear Jo Hye-Jin. He’s looking down on her, saying that she’s an easy opponent.]

The frontlines of both factions were now fighting each other, so we couldn't order the troops and the named beings to move back. Castlerock seemed impossible to defend even in my eyes.

[Jo Hye-Jin, a named being of the Human Faction, is trying to evacuate the denizens of Castlerock. Magic Swordsman Jung Jin Ho is mocking Jo Hye-Jin.]

Honestly, this battle wasn't important because we were going to lose Castlerock anyway. The true objection of this operation was to help the trapped denizens in Castlerock as well as the exhausted soldiers. This operation was to reduce the number of casualties to a minimum rather than conserve our power.

As expected, a pretty desperate battle was taking place down below.

Dummy Hye-Jin and the special squad putting their lives on the line and helping others escape made them look kind of dignified.

[Holy Spear Jo Hye-Jin is comforting the troops. She claims that she can open a path. Holy Spear Jo Hye-Jin is riding a unicorn. She has shattered the encirclement of the enemy troops while leading the denizens and troops. The denizens of Castlerock are scared. Jo Hye-Jin, the named being, empowers the denizens with courage. The troops are moving away.]

'She's pretty cool.'

[Jo Hye-Jin has carved open a path. The army of the Demon Faction is trying to stop the denizens that are trying to escape Castlerock. Jo Hye-Jin, the named being of the Human Faction, and the special squad say that they'll stay behind.

[Jo Hye-Jin fights Jung Jin-Ho, allowing the denizens of Castlerock to escape. Jo Hye-Jin and the special squad had decided to stay behind until the end to fight the enemy.]

'She's really cool.'

[Castlerock will remember her.]

[Holy Spear Jo Hye-Jin, the named being of the Human Faction, has perished at the hand of Jung Jin-Ho, the named being of the Demon Faction. Jung Jin-Ho has also suffered a fatal injury. It will take a really long time for him to recover from that injury.

[Jung Jin-Ho feels bitter about his mistakes. He mumbles that he shouldn't have looked down on her. He is walking away while mumbling that he should've been

more careful.]

[The continent will remember the heroes.]

— Although there were some unexpected losses… this isn't the end.

[The denizens of Castlerock and exhausted troops have failed to escape. The soldiers of the Demon Faction waiting in ambush had captured the denizens. The denizens of the Human Faction will be used as the source of mana for the Demon Faction.]

— The results aren't very good.

[The troops of the Demon Faction are returning with the troops and denizens of Castlerock.]

— This is reality. Anyone can sugarcoat things. Belief, justice, and courage. Saying things like fighting for the things one values or acting a certain way so you don't feel ashamed of yourself… Anyone… can say those things, but look. This is the result.

-…

— In the battle just now, you haven't achieved anything besides self-satisfaction.

'Maybe it's because Jo Hye-Jin's words hit him hard, but he's become really talkative.'

In my eyes, Jin Cheong sounded like he was trying to make an excuse for himself.

Jo Hye-Jin bit her lips, looking angry. It seemed that she didn't have anything to say, as she was staring at the situation board in a daze, but there was meaning behind her actions.

[The Human Faction remembers the sacrifice of Castlerock and Holy Spear Jo Hye-Jin, a named being. The operation was a failure, but her sacrifice has inspired many people. A named being of the Human Faction is telling the player that they can win.]

— This is no fun.

[The entire continent is singing about her sacrifice. The denizens have raised their swords and those who have run away in fear have raised their shields.]

— This is really not fun.

[The morale of the Human Faction has increased. The stats of the Human Faction have increased. Some of the named beings have awakened special skills. The Blue Guild that has fallen into despair has stood up once again with their swords raised.]

'It kind of feels like a shonen story, but it's not bad.'

I was sure this wasn't what Jo Hye-Jin wanted to happen, and I could see that from her elated face when she saw the unexpected result.

Jo Hye-Jin looked as if she was telling herself that her faith hadn't betrayed her. It was just a game, but nothing had ever made her happier than this, and this wasn't the only profit that she had obtained through her reckless behavior.

[An unknown spell has been activated on the denizens of Castlerock.]

— *Uh…*

[The denizens that the Demon Faction has captured are combusting spontaneously.]

— W-What?

[The Demon Faction's sources of mana are dying.]

— What?

[The Demon Faction's sources of mana are dying.]

[The Demon Faction's sources of mana are dying.]

[The Demon Faction's sources of mana are dying.]

[The Demon Faction has taken fatal damage thanks to the deaths of their sources of mana. The faction has insufficient mana to maintain their troops. The Demon Faction is shocked. A few black mages are in despair. Lee Seol-Ho of the Demon Faction is mumbling that it's all his fault. He screams, saying that he had never expected this.]

Jo Hye-Jin's sacrifice had created a righteous result.

I knew it—they would never be forgotten.

I untied my blue hair tie. There wasn't really any meaning behind it. It was just for show. I also pushed my hair back and crossed my legs after leaning back into my chair.

Jung Ha-Yan cast a confused gaze at me.

“Ha-Yan, have you been doing well?” I asked.

— You… You… You…!

Jung Ha-Yan's eyes became filled with disbelief, and she started crying upon realizing it.

This wasn't my body, but I was sure she had noticed the change in the air that Jo Hye-Jin was giving off. Jung Ha-Yan ran into my arms—Jo Hye-Jin’s arms to be exact, and she hugged me tightly.

Han Sora was stupefied, and I was sure that she had no idea what was going on, as she mumbled Jung Ha-Yan’s name nonstop.

'Ah, I should say something to Deok-Gu as well.'

“Deok-Gu, make me a cup of coffee,” I said.

“Hyung-nim… is that you?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“In response to the Holy Spear's call, the Son of Light has descended into her body," I replied.

“Is it—*Ah… is it* really you, hyung-nim?” Park Deok-Gu asked again.

— *Youuu…!*

Lastly, I had to say something to our demon summoner.

I felt bad about using Jo Hye-Jin like this, but I raised the corner of my lips and lifted my chin. Then, I revealed the most wicked and despicable smile ever. I really wanted to talk to him, as this was just too much fun. I was in the best mood at the moment.

"*Hmmm…* you fell for it again, Commander,[1]" I said.

— Lee Ki-Youuuuuung!!

"*Hahahahahaha!* Jin Cheong! You fell for it again, goddamn it!" I roared.

I really felt like I'd get addicted to this—this was worth coming down here.

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1. a throwback to one of my favorite chapters. CH 387 ☜

CHAPTER 827
THE LAST (60)

The unexpected turn of events plunged the room into chaos. It was kind of surprising and unexpected for me as well, but it didn't put me in a bad mood. First of all…

'The atmosphere changed.'

I wasn't saying the mood up here was bad. The room was filled with holy power, and I felt great. I definitely felt happy to be in this room.

"*Heuuuuuung… Kgh… Gaaaah… Hiccup… Hiccup…*"

Ha-Yan lost control of herself, and she cried while hugging me tightly. She had been spending her days pretending to be fine, saying that she'd come up here someday, but I was sure she had a lot on her mind. Jung Ha-Yan couldn't hold back her tears anymore.

"*Heung… Heuuuung…*"

I was embarrassed to do anything else because she was crying out loud while digging her face into my chest. All I could do was pat her head and back.

"*Kgh… Heuuung…* Oppaaa… *Kgh… Kgh*…"

Jung Ha-Yan's wailing had to have surprised Han Sora because she was trying to calm the former down. Unfortunately, it wasn't really working.

"Miss Jung Ha-Yan? Miss… Jung Ha-Yan? Miss… Jung Ha-Yan?" Han Sora called out.

"I'm fine, Miss Sora," I told her.

"*Ah*… Sub Guild Master? Is that really you?" Han Sora asked.

I nodded slowly, and Han Sora looked as if she understood.

Han Sora stared at Jung Ha-Yan, who was mumbling to herself, and felt relieved. Han Sora was worried that Jung Ha-Yan would do something unexpected, as they were in the middle of a game.

'I don't think Ha-Yan will calm down anytime soon.'

"So… *Heuuuung… Kgh… Kgh… Hiccup…*"

Jung Ha-Yan's face was covered in tears and snot; she was so emotional that I couldn't understand what she was saying.

"Is that what happened?" I asked as calmly as possible while nodding.

Jung Ha-Yan buried her face in my side again and cried.

Eventually, she calmed down a bit as I patted her back, and she started squeezing herself as close to me as possible.

Jung Ha-Yan soon came back to her senses because she got up again and looked at my face. Something had to be bothering her because she stared at Jo Hye-Jin's face, and she repeated her actions before after nodding lightly.

I wasn't sure exactly what she was doing, but she seemed to be questioning the fact that she couldn't comprehend how I managed to descend into Jo Hye-Jin's body.

She seemed kind of sad about it, but she seemed to have accepted the situation and had to have reached the conclusion that I was indeed Lee Ki-Young.

I felt better to see Jung Ha-Yan crying with a happy look.

Jung Ha-Yan stared alternatingly between Han Sora and me, and she looked like the happiest person in the world. I was sure that this wasn't the exact situation she had in mind, but the situation she had drawn in her head was completed temporarily, so she looked really happy.

Park Deok-Gu wasn't all that different. He was itching to hug me right now.

"Is it really you, hyung-nim… *Kgh…*" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"…"

“Is that really you? Really…” Park Deok-Gu repeated.

I felt uncomfortable seeing the large-framed pig covering his face with his large hands while crying.

“Just make me some coffee,” I told him.

Park Deok-Gu did what I asked him to do, and he walked over to me while carrying a cup of coffee with his large and trembling hands.

He seemed to be having a hard time controlling his emotions because half of the coffee had spilled on the tray, but it didn’t taste that bad.

Park Deok-Gu seemed lost because he was standing around afterward, so I extended my hand toward him, and he immediately bowed. I messed up his hair, and he started trembling as tears started falling to the ground.

“*Kgh…*”

It was similar to the time with Jo Hye-Jin.

This wasn't exactly similar, but I had shown my old self to him, and he seemed really relieved about that. He seemed happy about being liberated from his worries of us drifting apart or that I might not be the same old Lee Ki-Young.

“Y-You… should’ve at least told me that you were… doing fine…” Park Deok-Gu mumbled.

“Well, now you know. I’d love to catch up, but I don’t have time. Make me another cup of coffee, Deok-Gu. It’s been a while since I drank coffee,” I requested.

“Hey! I practiced!” Park Deok-Gu shouted to hide his embarrassment.

I turned to the *kind* villain, Jin Cheong, and I couldn’t help but laugh to see him giving us time to catch up.

‘He has good manners.’

I wasn't sure if he had realized the fact that it didn't matter even if he yelled at us to stop, as it was still our turn.

I saw him looking at me with eyes full of all sorts of emotions.

Jin Cheong was gnashing his teeth with a frown, and he looked as if he was going to run at me at any moment and choke the life out of me. He was trying his best to calm down, but I soon saw him getting antsy.

— You bastard… you bastard…! You bastard!!

'He's bad at controlling his emotions. I don't remember him being this bad… I think he has anger management issues.'

It wasn't the selective anger management issue a normal person would have, and I couldn't help but laugh upon seeing him get angry to the point that he couldn't control his emotions.

Perhaps my kind personality had become kind of twisted in his eyes. He was usually calm, but he instantly became worked up and antsy the moment he saw my face.

The look on his face gave me a ton of energy.

— You wicked scum! You scummy bastard! You dirty and hideous fraud!

Jin Cheong had been trying to hide his true nature during this game.

I couldn't understand why he would go that far, but it was funny how he had revealed his true self even though he was just a mere imitation. I had my doubts, but I finally knew why. I didn't know exactly how Jin Cheong got to this position, but the man before me had memories of the past.

It seemed that he wasn't just a mere imitation but Jin Cheong himself.

"Why are you so worked up, Commander? Aren't you an intellectual? Intellectuals should talk it out," I said.

— Lee Ki-Young… Lee Ki-Youuung!

"We ended things on a good note. People will think things ended badly between us. *Pfft*…" I added.

— What? What did you say? How dare you talk bullshit?! You think you're allowed to

say those kinds of things?! How dare you!

“Commander, you’re too angry. It’s been a while since we’ve met, so we should catch up. *Ah!* How about a cup of coffee? Deok-Gu, serve him a cup of coffee as well. *Pfft… hehe…*” I told him.

— Y-You…

“*Ah*, I should apologize since I made mistakes, but I do have my reasons. I did my best, but you guys caused the mess. I wanted to accept your offer, but the timing… *Pfft*! The timing was just bad. I’m talking about those bastards from the demon organization. Your—*Hahahaha!*” I laughed.

— Lee Ki-*Youuuuuuuung!*

“*Hahahahaha! Cough! Hahahaha! Cough! Cough! Hahahahaha!*” I laughed boisterously.

— Lee Ki-Young, you bastard!

Jin Cheong jumped up from his seat and stretched out his hand, but the system didn’t allow it. He frowned and huffed as if something invisible was blocking him. I was sure that if he still had his fleshly body, he would have died from high blood pressure.

His anger level was *that* high.

I thought I wouldn’t be able to convey my feelings with Hye-Jin’s face, but I was relieved that I could do so. After all, this was going to be the last time I'd get to see this magnificent sight.

“Commander, your body, or is it your spirit? Whatever you are, fury is not good for your health. Where’s the demon summoner that I saw during our first meeting? You should show that side of yours. Be calm and charismatic,” I told him.

—…

“You look really pitiful right now, Commander. *Hahaha!* You look so pitiful that it’s making me laugh. It’s not a good look to show to the man who used to be your nemesis,” I added.

—…

'Ah, damn it… Looks like I took it too far.'

Perhaps I shouldn't have said the latter part of my sentence.

I stared at him mockingly because I wanted to make him even angrier, but it seemed that his fury had reached its limit to the extent that it actually went down, as it could no longer go up.

Moments later, I saw him collecting his breath, and he looked like he was trying to hide his face from me because he was trying to avoid making eye contact with me.

If he ended up making direct eye contact with me while I was staring at him mockingly, I was sure he'd lose it again.

— Scummy bastard.

'You've returned to your true self.'

Jin Cheong crossed his legs and lifted his chin.

I touched the board using my middle finger and served him coffee with exaggerated hand gestures, but he accepted the coffee nonchalantly and drank it in a dignified manner. I was annoyed because he was trying to erase the angry side he had shown to me earlier, but so what?

— Don't think I'll fall for your cheap tricks, you dirty fraud.

"You looked like you fell for it pretty hard a moment ago, though… You must've come back to your senses," I said.

'Aww, man. I'm sure it would've been more effective if he's staring at my actual face.'

— I think it's better that it turned out this way. I was waiting for it.

"It's pretty obvious what you're thinking, Commander. Either repaying the debt from back then or killing me yourself. You're a cliched villain with a cliched mindset. You should come up with a plan that'll allow everyone to profit," I told him.

— It's pretty obvious what *you're* thinking. You're worried right now.

"I have no reason to be worried," I commented.

— You're well aware that you can't beat me. I find you pitiful for using useless provocations and exaggerating your actions.

"I could say the same for you, Commander," I said.

— Your appearance reeks of low self-esteem, you rat. Seeing you going up on stage like you're an actor is no different from a frightened animal trying to make itself look bigger. You poor, pitiful fool.

"You're the one to talk. Who do you think is more pitiful between us? Is it you who had lost his honor or me who's being revered as a god as we speak?" I asked.

— It doesn't matter the position you're in. What's important are the emotions you're feeling right now. It's funny how you're feeling inferior toward me despite being a god of the continent. I don't know whether you've always felt this way or if it's something you felt later, but—

"You crazy demon summoner," I interrupted.

— That's the face I was looking for.

"Your tongue has improved, but who do you think is more anxious?" I questioned.

— Those who have a lot to lose feel anxious even about the smallest thing.

"Don't you remember how the Republic War ended? You dumb monkey. Don't even get me started on the current situation," I said.

— It was a mistake. I accept the fact that I lost back then, but it's going to be different this time…

"Different, my ass. You bastard. I think you've forgotten the big defeat you experienced just now. To me, you look like a frightened beast trying to make yourself look bigger. I obviously have the upper hand. You shouldn't bluff so much," I said.

— Don't think everyone is like you and will make themselves look bigger to

intimidate their opponent.

“Yeah, sure, thanks for that speech, Commander. Let’s see how far our great Commander’s overflowing wisdom and tactics will take him. What do you think I’ll do?” I asked.

—…

“Tell me, Commander. You bastard. Tell me with that smart mouth of yours. What… do you think I’ll do?” I repeated.

Jin Cheong bit his lips.

‘I honestly don’t know what I’ll do either, so he obviously won’t know either.’

— Bastard…

However, he and I both knew this one thing…

‘The most important part is taking control of the pace.’

“You’re a demon summoner without honor, so what would you know? Right, Ha-Yan?” I asked.

“Y-Yes! A demon summoner without honor d-doesn’t know anything. *Hehe*…” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

“Don’t you agree, Miss Sora?” I asked.

“*Ah…* Yes… A demon summoner without honor won't… know…” Han Sora answered.

Jin Cheong was trying to calm himself down, but he couldn’t stop himself from frowning.

“Hey, a demon summoner who knows nothing!” Park Deok-Gu shouted.

Attacks from multiple people were more painful than an attack from only one person.

‘How dare you act up before me… when… ’

—...

'...when you have no comrades or family?'

CHAPTER 828
THE LAST (61)

Jin Cheong's dead comrades weren't coming back.

"The demon summoner knows nothing! He's so evil that even Satan will hate him! I feel bad for the denizens of the Republic who had believed and followed him!" Park Deok-Gu shouted.

'Good job, Deok-Gu.'

"He's filled with nothing but malice toward the continent. I can't believe he's doing this even after death. I've met a lot of people, but it's my first time seeing a psychopath like him! He's just a demon's dirty servant! If you have even a little bit of humanity left, I suggest you confess your sins and kneel before the light! You should say something as well, Sora," Park Deok-Gu said.

"*Ah*… right. Y-You demon summoner… how… how could you… summon a demon… on this peaceful continent…" Han Sora stuttered.

Normally, clumps of light would shine brighter the more of them were together.

'It's a true cry that comes from the heart.'

Just staring at him with a smile was enough to make him feel anxious. He was more anxious about losing reason rather than getting criticized. I was sure he knew that he couldn't lose his reason here, not lose control over the pacing of the game, and not get involved in useless mind wars.

However, he was definitely having a hard time keeping himself calm.

I could tell that this situation was affecting his arrogance.

The holy light was the only thing that tainted him when he was alive, so I was sure it was hard to keep composed while looking at the holy light. Seeing that he had yet to answer my question about what I was going to do next…

'...He's obviously telling himself that he needs to be careful.'

I was an unpredictable person in Jin Cheong's eyes, and he had described me as a dirty fraud and a moron who bluffed as often as breathing, but I was sure that wasn't what he actually thought of me.

'He's not stupid enough not to learn from his mistakes.'

As I said, he had learned many things from his previous mistakes.

Jin Cheong knew that the human before him was unpredictable.

I didn't have the ability to run the game, but he probably thought that I had the ability to turn the tables around. He might even be overestimating me.

The strange combustion of the people who had been providing the Demon Faction with mana had probably proved his assumption in his eyes. I wasn't really happy about him being cautious of me, but if possible, I wanted him to overestimate me even more.

It was important to make him keep his guard up and make things really unpredictable.

We'd win a long, drawn-out battle, anyway.

It was obvious what was going to happen to his demon faction.

Jin Cheon frowned quietly and looked at the board again, and he lifted his chin again after confirming that no major damage had been inflicted on the main unit.

'He's thinking about fighting.'

He believed that he could change the situation despite his disadvantage.

'I don't like this.'

Waving the white flag would be the right thing to do, but he had found a way out that I couldn't even see, which I found annoying.

— Our conversation was long. I was actually curious about what you were going to

do. Shouldn’t you keep playing, as you have a chance at winning?

[Sunset Kim Hyun-Sung, a named being, is looking up toward the sky. He’s expressing his thoughts that cannot be conveyed to the player. Kim Hyun-Sung’s thoughts were not delivered.]

‘Why is he so buggy?’

— I’m curious about your next move. I'm sure it's going to be a stupid bluff. Maybe you still have tricks up your sleeve?

There was no need to feel surprised, as it was important to be unpredictable in situations like this. I didn’t need to limit it specifically to this game. It was best to act that way if Jin Cheong truly considered me an unpredictable human.

Winning this game was the clear condition of the dungeon, but at this point, I wanted him to come up with various hypotheses. If I'd find it easier to move around by either upping the stakes or telling him that I had found a strategy unknown to him, then…

‘There’s nothing better than muddying the waters.’

I didn’t bother focusing on the game board.

I talked to Ha-Yan, drank coffee, and even stood up.

I placed the troops and the denizens at the front line, and then I eventually finished all the war preparations. I talked to Deok-Gu and asked him about any news regarding the Federation, which was where Hee-Ra noona was located at the moment.

The most important part was that I had to smirk at Jin Cheong as if this game didn’t really matter.

I was sure it’d be hard for him to ignore that.

“How did you meet Lee Ji-Hye, Commander?” I asked.

This question will grab his attention.

— That’s a silly question. I simply received an offer from someone.

“Were you aware of the fact that I lost my life?” I questioned.

— Do I need to answer that? I'm not sure if this conversation is important. How about focusing more on the war?

“It’s actually not important, and this event isn’t that important either. Do you understand what’s happening right now?” I asked.

— I do.

“A Mythic-rank dungeon called 'The Continent Where the Son of Light Was Sacrificed' has appeared. Are you aware of the fact that you’re being used as a chess piece for this event? In your eyes, this quest might be the reason behind your existence, but it doesn’t hold the same weight for me,” I told him.

— Lies.

“It’s fine if that’s what you think,” I said.

— You’re obviously lying. I don’t know whether you just don't have the confidence or if you're panicking, but you’re definitely just bluffing. You fool. I told you that people who have something they need to protect will inevitably become weak. Is there a reason why that crazy woman and that big fool are not allowed to hear your voice?

“It doesn’t matter if they hear my voice. Fair is fair, after all,” I answered.

— You’re anxious. You’re surprised because it’s not going your way.

“You’ve become a lie detector during the time I haven’t seen you,” I commented.

— I was simply pointing out what I had seen, you scum.

“I’m not sure how you’re distinguishing them, but I find it funny that you think your interpretation is correct,” I said.

— It’s pretty simple. You do the things you do to show off. I think it’s too great of a coincidence for you to descend into that woman's body like you're some kind of movie protagonist. It was probably around the time when that woman died on this

small battlefield. It may have seemed like she was acting while fooling herself, but don't even think that you can fool me.

"You're pretty good at deductions," I told him.

— That pitiful acting might just be a show to hide your true feelings. It makes sense if you think that you've provoked me and have created tension to hide your anxiety. *Ah!* Of course, this is simply an assumption… like you said.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. You're right, Commander," I said.

— If I may add one more thing, you're acting this way right now to hide your anxiety. You're nervous. I truly didn't expect that even scum like you would have people that you cherish, but in my eyes, you're just making a mistake.

'This bastard is really annoying.'

— Unlike you… I'm going to focus solely on this war.

'I'm really annoyed.'

However, I didn't think he was confident about his assumption.

Actually, he was probably trying to suppress his confidence because he was hoping that I would end up thinking that way.

Basically, he was trying to handle all the variables and the changes happening at the moment all at the same time. I didn't need to deny his words or agree with them. In fact, what I would do wouldn't even matter.

"Well, I won't deny it," I said.

— So I was right. Is that woman's honor holding you back? How absurd.

"It's true that I don't want our Hye-Jin to die. You've overanalyzed the fact that I simply descended here to prevent her death; I mean, *maybe* I did come here to do that. Will it make you feel better if I reveal everything like this?" I asked.

As soon as I calmed myself down, I immediately felt tears on my face.

Jin Cheong's poker face crumbled briefly as he frowned.

Let us say that I had lost Jo Hye-Jin—I had lost the person who had changed me and had become important to me. My hands trembled like aspen trees, and I felt like I was falling into a bottomless pit. Anger, despair, and all sorts of negative emotions created a confused mixture of emotions within me. My chin quivered, and tears wouldn't stop falling down my cheeks.

"*Ah… Uh… Ugh…*"

I made strange noises as I tried to catch my breath.

My head was spinning, and I felt like I was going to vomi—

— Crazy bastard. You're really out of your mind.

'I feel disgusted. I'm not going to do this again.'

"Who do you think you're talking to? Regardless of what you think of me, I'm willing to accommodate you, Commander…" I said.

— Crazy bastard.

I tapped my thigh and saw Jin Cheong raising an eyebrow.

"You're free to think however you want, but you can just think of me as a dog who changes his words depending on the situation I'm in. *Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof!*" I barked.

— I have some serious advice for you. You'll end up becoming crazy; it doesn't matter what kind of ending you'll meet.

"That's not for you to decide, so don't even think about judging me. It's annoying. Fine, it honestly disgusts me. When I think about losing something that's mine, I might actually go crazy, like you said, but it doesn't matter," I told him.

— That might actually happen.

"Did you know that the condition for clearing this dungeon is either my revival or the end of all living things?" I asked.

— I’m aware.

“I think you returned here because you want the latter to happen, but to me, it doesn’t matter if the latter happens,” I said.

—…

“My third life will start,” I added.

—…

“When all life ends, everything will go back to the beginning, and we’ll start all over again. It’ll be kind of sad, but who cares? I’ll meet the ones who are mine, anyway. I'm going to meet them again, so I won’t even feel sad. You saw it just now. It's going to be kind of complicated and bothersome, but the result won’t change,” I explained.

— Crazy bastard.

“You accepted the offer because you wanted revenge, right?” I questioned.

— I won’t deny it.

“You really think you’ll get your revenge? You really think I’ll fall into despair?” I asked.

—…

I had to say something here.

“I’ll give you a choice, Commander,” I said.

—…

“Will you pick revenge or honor[1]?” I asked.

—…

“Or are you not going to make a deal with a bastard like me?” I asked. Then, I took a sip of my coffee and chuckled.

Jin Cheong stared wordlessly at me.

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1. Veela: I think it's a reference to CH 427 when our MC asked Jin Cheong a question along the lines of this ☜

CHAPTER 829
THE LAST (62)

Jin Cheong was quiet for a while. Then, he looked down, seemingly thinking over something. I was sure he was thinking about many things. He was telling himself not to trust me and that it was all just bullshit, but he was definitely curious about the contract conditions. He could simply think of it as bullshit, but he definitely wouldn't do that.

'He'll gain nothing from that, after all.'

His raison d'etre—the reason behind his reappearance had just vanished, but it wasn't strange, as it usually happened to rational, prideful, pragmatic, and logical people like him. They were the type of people who would abandon even their emotions to profit.

They'd also stay rational the moment they decided to do so. They'd try their best not to think about profiting, but it'd always come to their mind. They were always calculative, and I was sure he was thinking about what he could do to profit rather than what he could do to stage a pointless revenge.

"H-Hyung-nim, what did that demon summoner say?" Park Deok-Gu asked. He had to be worried about my reaction earlier.

"Don't worry about it," I answered and pushed my hair back.

'Is he thinking about the third life?'

Was he shocked by the fact that we were in our second life, or was he shocked by the fact that there was a way to turn back time?

Perhaps I had given him too many hints, but so what? He had no choice.

The fact that he hadn't said anything meant that he needed time to understand everything. It was hard to tell exactly who'd profit more, but the fact that I had succeeded in revealing his true colors wasn't that bad at all.

'That was my original goal, after all.'

My goal to muddy the waters was going swimmingly.

[The main force of the Demon Faction advances with roars.]

[The fighting spirit of the Human Faction burns bright. They say that we must not forget Jo Hye-Jin's sacrifice. They claim that they'll be able to chase out the enemy as long as they are working together.]

[The rangers of the Black Swan Guild want to investigate the issues that the Demon Faction has been experiencing recently. The analysts are saying the army of the Demon Faction isn't going to back down. They report that we must prepare for the final battle.]

[Kim Hyun-Sung is praying.]

[Ito Sota is advancing with the army.]

[The castle defense will soon begin. The black mages of the Demon Faction are building a tower of corpses and are moving to the castle walls. The allied mages are channeling their spells. Large and small skirmishes are everywhere.]

'This is so annoying.'

We were trying to get the upper hand by being persistent, but he was doing the same thing as me, so it was pretty hard to maintain everything.

Both sides ended up getting what they wanted, but it felt like I was accumulating losses and Jin Cheong was slowly gaining the upper hand, all thanks to the skirmishes.

I wasn't sure whether he was aware of the fact that there wasn't much time left, but he still had the same attitude as earlier. He could be acting that way because he thought he could continuously siphon mana from the people; he definitely thought that his situation was a bit better than he expected.

Meanwhile, Jung Ha-Yan was still moving even closer to me as if she wasn't going to part ways with me. I had to act like I didn't care about what was going to happen, so I did some small talk with her.

It was pretty fun, but I honestly couldn't focus on the conversation.

"I-I'm going to become the God of Magic and go up there," Jung Ha-Yan said.

"I've been watching you, Ha-Yan," I told her.

"S-S-Sora is going to become the Angel of Magic…" Jung Ha-Yan added.

"Really?"

'I don't know what he's after.'

I couldn't bring it up first or urge him to tell me.

The moment I do that, he'd realize my goal. It'd be better to make Jin Cheong think that I was giving him a chance. Things would become a lot better for me if that happened, and it was true that I *did* give him a chance.

"That's just like you, Commander," I said.

— Your lack of ethics is still the same.

"Is ethics really needed when playing war?" I asked.

— It's not important because what everyone wants is the outcome. However, I don't respect those types of people. Anyway, I feel like we're having a casual conversation, which is great because it helps both sides understand each other more.

"I didn't know you enjoyed conversations," I commented.

— I'm sure you've realized it, but with you, it doesn't feel like I'm having a mere conversation. I have nothing to say to someone irresponsible, who would only work once there is profit to obtain. Actually, in some ways, it's new to me. It's actually pretty simple. I don't need to understand, nor do I need to make you understand because the result is the only thing that matters.

[Ito Sota of the Demon Faction and Cha Hee-Ra of the Human Faction are fighting. Cha Hee-Ra laughs like a maniac. Ito Sota is frightened, but he knows that he must fight.]

“Bullshit,” I commented.

[The formation of the main force is changing due to the player’s order. The Demon Faction is also changing its tactics to match the formation of the Human Faction.

[The battle continues…]

[The denizens and priests of the Human Faction are saying this battle will leave a mark on the history of this continent. They’re mumbling that it’s a huge and righteous war that will never happen again, and everyone will remember today’s fight.]

— The third life…

“So you are curious,” I said.

[The tactical commanders of the Human Faction are saying that this is a ridiculous battle. They’re saying that the continent’s tactical manual will change from today onward. They’re certain this will be written on the page in the history of war.]

“It’s interesting that you don’t think I’m bluffing.” I pointed out.

— I’m simply curious. So… you’ve already experienced this kind of situation once. Did you intentionally mention the third life to emphasize the fact that you can do this again?

[The soldiers of the Human Faction are raising their flag. The holy power of the priests and the magic of the mages are spreading like wildfire throughout the continent. Reinforcements have arrived on both sides. Another massive battle is taking place.]

[Sunset Swordsman Kim Hyun-Sung says that he can move. He’s praying that he’s ready to go out there.]

“Think whatever you want,” I said.

[The player wants to use the Sunset Swordsman, a named being of the Human Faction. The Sunset Swordsman has agreed with the player’s order. The camp of the Demon Faction troops is disintegrating beneath the sunset. Kim Hyun-Sung is nodding.]

“There are too many things for you to comprehend everything, Commander. It’ll be ridiculous to explain everything,” I told him.

— I’m sure of one thing. Like you said, it might not matter what happens, but I know that you want me to cooperate with you. You don’t have a choice.

[Dispatching Jung Jin-Ho of the Demon Faction. Jung Jin-Ho, a named being, has joined the battlefield. He releases a loud scream, and his allied troops end up suffering a lot of damage.]

“Funny. I have a choice, not you,” I said.

[The Human Faction is creating a party. They say that we can take them down as long as we remain steadfast. Raise your spears and advance. The priests sing songs praising the player. Songs of victory have pervaded the air, giving strength to the allied troops.]

“I just don't want things to become needlessly bothersome or complicated. It’s annoying if things don’t go the way I planned it to go,” I told him.

—…

Jin Cheong glanced at the battlefield, and I was sure he was busy comprehending the things that were happening on the battlefield.

The war raged on, and it was hard to tell who was winning.

The fights in some areas were pure chaos, while fights in the other regions had truly ended. The named beings on each side were being analyzed and placed on battlefields where they would be the most efficient. They had also been provided with tactics and plans to counterattack the enemy named beings.

This wasn’t an organized battlefield; we were simply going back and forth. It was a bit of an exaggeration to say that it felt like the board was alive and was moving on its own, but the battlefield was changing constantly, making it difficult to comprehend everything all at once.

I made a ridiculous move.

Jin Cheong scoffed at it, but it was funny how he ended up reacting to it.

In his head, he was telling himself I was bluffing, but…

'His reaction is showing his true nature.'

He had no choice but to react to my poor and incomprehensible move. Why? It was because he had learned a lesson from the past. He had to consider the possibility that I *wasn't* bluffing.

[The Human Faction and Demon Faction are exchanging moves with their swords and spears. The commanders believe that the God of War is watching over them. They say incomprehensible battles and orders will lead to the best result.

[The analysts are no longer submitting reports. They say that comprehending the current war situation was beyond their abilities, so they are just going to follow the player's orders.]

[Wind of Celia Ito Sota is running after receiving severe injuries.]

[God of War Cha Hee-Ra, a named being, falls into a trap after chasing Ito Sota. The reinforcements that were on stand-by have joined the fight.]

[Park Yeon-Joo, a named being of the Human Faction, has died. The continent will remember her.]

[Mikhail, a named being of the Demon Faction, has died. The Demon Faction mourns his death.]

I had to keep moving my eyes and hands because the battlefield was changing constantly, and it felt like the demon summoner had decided to focus on the game as well.

Jung Ha-Yan was staring quietly at the pieces while braiding Jo Hye-Jin's hair.

I sat up straight, and I saw Han Sora moving quickly to quietly drag Jung Ha-Yan away. Han Sora had to have realized that I needed to focus on the war. After taking a sip of my coffee, I stared at the board.

Jin Cheong was staring at the board as well.

[The Human Faction has abandoned the castle walls and is retreating.]

[The Demon Faction isn't chasing after them. They're moving immediately to the fifth line.]

[The balance of the fifth line is falling apart. The Human Faction is letting out a shout of victory.]

'We're at an advantage here but at a disadvantage there.'

[The Human Faction has achieved a great victory.]

'Did he let his guard down?'

[The Human Faction has achieved another great victory. The Demon Faction of the first line has been completely destroyed.]

'Idiot. Idiooooooot!'

[The Demon Faction has captured Shield of Faith Park Deok-Gu, a named being of the Human Faction.]

—…

"What?"

— I…

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

— I didn't say anything.

"What, you bastard?" I questioned.

— I said I didn't say anything.

"So what the hell are you going to do, you fuckin' bastard?!" I shouted.

—…

"Kill me," I provoked him.

—…

“Kill me if you can,” I repeated.

—…

“Kill me and see what happens. This time… I” I trailed off.

'Uh.'

“I…” I trailed off once again.

'I?'

CHAPTER 830
THE LAST (63)

'You think I'm going to lose?'

"Shiiit…" I cursed.

"Hyung-nim, hyung-nim… are you okay? D-Did something happen?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Please go away, man," I told him.

"What are you…"

'You really think I'm going to lose this time, too?'

"What the hell…" I mumbled.

"Hyung-nim!" Park Deok-Gu shouted.

"*Ah!* Go away, you pig! Just go over there!" I yelled.

I saw him flying away and crashing with a loud *bang*.

'Damn it, I didn't want to do that. Wait, I'm strong… '

It seemed that I had forgotten just how strong Jo Hye-Jin was.

Park Deok-Gu looked at me with a worried look. His face was pale, and it seemed like he had no idea what to do. It was the same for Jung Ha-Yan. She stared warily at me, and she seemed like she was going to extend her hand out, but she just stared at me quietly.

Han Sora quietly pulled Jung Ha-Yan's hand back, seemingly scared of me.

"*Ah, ah. Uh… um…* So… O-O-Oppa…" Jung Ha-Yan mumbled. I saw tears as her eyes

widened, and her sad face reminded me of that expression of hers at the time.

'Oppa… will come… cough… to save… me… '

"What the heck…" I mumbled.

'He's here. He came… to save me.'

"What the hell…" I said.

'I-I'm… glad… Now… we… can truly… love… '

I stretched my hand out unknowingly and patted Jung Ha-Yan's head. Jung Ha-Yan smiled, looking relieved. It seemed that I didn't look normal in Jung Ha-Yan and Park Deok-Gu's eyes. Han Sora even looked at me as if I were some lunatic psychopath.

I was running out of breath, and my head was pounding. I couldn't understand why this was happening. The most obvious reason I could think of was…

'Maybe it's because I'm in Hye-Jin's body.'

I had no idea about the side effects of descending into someone else's body, but there was definitely something wrong with my body.

Since I could remember the memories of my first life, there had to be something wrong with the system inside my head. It was kind of funny diagnosing myself as to whether there was something wrong with my head or not, but this was the best way I could describe the current situation.

'Did my memories from my first life just come back to me? Or… did the masked hero enter my mind?'

One thing I was sure of was that it was related to my descent, as I had experienced something similar before. I thought perhaps Lee Ki-Young, the scummy fraud, was just bluffing, but there was a possibility that the masked hero's remnant was in my mind.

I suddenly remembered how Lee Ki-Young placed his hand on Kim Hyun-Sung's shoulder and pointed at the sky in the final moments of the war with the Outer God.

There was certainly some foreshadowing there.

I simply ignored it and pushed it to the back of my mind. However, Park Deok-Gu had to have triggered it, as my mind was already unstable. I wasn't sure, but I had to come up with some kind of conclusion even though it wasn't something I could do right now.

'This demon-summoning bastard.'

Jin Cheong looked at me quietly. Park Deok-Gu and Jung Ha-Yan had to have realized that it wasn't a good idea to provoke me because they looked at me from a bit far away.

I cast a soundproofing spell and looked down at the game board.

The mini Park Deok-Gu was struggling against his restraints.

'I was too worked up.'

I felt bitter because it seemed that I had shown everyone a side of me that I didn't need to show. It felt like Jin Cheong knew my weakness, and it wasn't a good feeling at all.

'Damn it, I got too emotional. Lee Ki-Young, you idiot. No, you stupid masked hero.'

There was no need for me to get so worked up because the game wasn't over yet.

Even if the fake pig ended up dying here, I just had to win, and the real pig wouldn't die.

In fact, laughing it off was the most reasonable thing to do because I didn't want Jin Cheong to think that I had a weakness. Actually, the things that I had done after coming here might give me a ton of problems.

'Maybe I drank too much coffee.'

The coffee was so good that I couldn't stop drinking it. Perhaps I showed too much of my emotions. It might have also been unnatural to show up after Mini Hye-Jin's death

The issue could have also started when I showed that I was happy to see Deok-Gu and Ha-Yan. However, I was convinced that capturing Park Deok-Gu was just a coincidence. It was possible that Jin Cheong had obtained a lot of information from Lee Ji-Hye, but there was no way he'd tell Jin Cheong that I cherished the pig a lot.

I had exaggerated things when he merely took a stab in the dark.

'I shouldn't act like this.'

— Now we can talk.

"What do you want?" I asked.

— I'm sure you know what…

"He's worthless as a pawn. Are you going to kill him?" I questioned.

— I'm not sure, but is that important? If you win this war, it doesn't matter whether that big idiot dies or not. Or are you not confident? That's hilarious because you clearly have the upper hand just looking at the current situation.

"…"

'Bastard.'

"I don't like your eyes, you demon-summoning bastard," I told him.

— I can say the same thing. I had no idea that you're the type to get sentimental, but… it's none of my concern. Let me rephrase what I said earlier. You've gone mad.

'Crazy psychopath.'

I didn't know what this guy wanted, but I did have a few ideas.

'Does he want to have a proper battle?'

That was the only reason I could think of at the moment.

Of course, there could be traps, as we weren't warriors.

It didn’t make sense, nor was it right to reveal all my cards, as that would be a stupid thing to do. The fact that he said he enjoyed having a conversation could lead to him stabbing me in the back, but…

‘It makes sense.’

The commander of the Republic wanted to protect his pride, and I could look disgraceful by changing the subject.

It might seem like I wasn't giving my all for this war, or he could be wanting to talk about whatever was on his mind.

There was a chance that he wanted to fix his past mistakes instead of getting revenge.

Basically, he might be trying to create a situation where I had no choice but to fight, as that was the only way he could recover his pride. In that sense, Jin Cheong had basically revealed his cards, and he might be thinking that I was aware of his wish.

I turned and saw Jin Cheong looking at me.

— Let’s continue.

It was true that I didn’t have time to think about many different things, so I bit my lips and had to focus on the board. The fighting continued.

I provoked and played hard to get, but all he did was focus on the board. Perhaps he thought that continuing the conversation would no longer be beneficial, but I had an idea as to what he wanted to say.

‘So he wants to talk here, huh?’

The huge battles continued, and it wasn’t a simple clash of tactics.

I knew that using straightforward war tactics wasn’t going to help me win.

We were accumulating huge losses, and as time ticked by, Jin Cheong started to look anxious. I could tell that he didn’t want to lose his troops, and I was in the same boat as him. We both didn't have many resources left, and we were in a situation where the smallest loss was going to hurt.

Magic Swordsman Jung Jin-Ho and Kim Hyun-Sung clashed swords, and the troops started fighting each other as well.

The routine was the same—we would attack, retreat, and set up traps while retreating, but the troops would change formations depending on their opponent's actions.

I saw Jin Cheong trying to control even the smallest details.

'He's pretty smart.'

We were starting to lose the lines we thought we were winning, and the lines we were going to abandon were starting to win. It was impossible to understand the natural flow of the battlefield at a glance, but it felt like my eyes were seeing a brand-new world.

'Shit, we're growing while in battle!'

The light was supposed to grow amidst adversity.

It felt like my eyes were seeing things that weren't stats or traits.

It was funny how I was desperately holding on to this small board and was becoming more and more focused on it. After wiping away the blood trickling down my nose, I looked down at the board again. The demon summoner was frowning, and it was probably because he was worried about the line that had just collapsed.

'Have you noticed it? That was a trap. How about this? This is… '

"What do you think about this?"

What the hell?

"That was an interesting move, but that was all it was. It would've been great if that woman were here. I thought things would be a bit different now that we're talking face-to-face like this, but… it doesn't feel like we're having a proper conversation at all," Jin Cheong said.

"You sure are greedy for someone that's dying. I think it's rude to say that when I came all this way just to spend your last moments with you… How dare you tell me to bring

someone else. You should know your manners at the very least," I said.

"…"

"It's true that I did talk to her, and she did want to come here, but… I had a feeling that there would be an argument if she were to come here," I told him.

"…"

"I have a feeling she'll spare you. She becomes greedy when it comes to talent, and she'll think about how she can use you. I had a feeling that I'd be convinced by her words, so I came by myself," I confessed.

"…"

"It's true that I'm greedy as well, but… you're really competent. You're too competent for us to use," I added.

"That's a kind thing to say to someone who's losing," Jin Cheong remarked.

"How long have you known about us?" I asked.

"Is that important?" Jin Cheong asked.

"Some of our plans ended up getting ruined because of you… You even used us a few times. Is it strange to wonder how long you've known us? There might be others who are aware of us," I said.

"A few people know, but is that really important? You guys are going to show yourselves soon anyway, right? Am I wrong… Lee Ki-Young?" he asked.

"…"

"…"

"As expected, you just won't do," I said.

"I'll take that as a compliment," he said.

"…"

"…"

"Now, let's get straight to the point," I suggested.

"…"

"The extermination that happened a long time ago and the list of people who agreed to that plan… I heard you know who's on that list. You heard it all from that bastard who fled to the Republic, right?" I asked.

"I thought you already knew the names in that list?" Jin Cheong asked.

"Yes, I know. I just wanted to confirm," I answered.

"Is there a reason I should tell you that?" Jin Cheong questioned.

"You're about to die, so how about just telling me what I want instead of trying to act all high and mighty? There are other people I can ask anyway," I told him.

"…"

"…"

"Charlotte of the Empire."

"Now we're talking."

"Song Jung-Wook of Castlerock."

"He's dead."

"Malen of the Vatican."

"Dead."

"Dawan's…"

"Yeah, yeah, yeah."

"Celia's…"

“Dead.”

“And…”

“…”

“Kim Hyun-Sung of Lindel.”

CHAPTER 831
THE LAST (64)

Fwooosh!

I felt my vision returning to normal.

'Kim Hyun-Sung of Lindel?'

"Kim Hyun-Sung of Lindel."

'Is this my first life? Did I see my first life just now?'

I frowned unknowingly, but I snapped back to reality and suppressed my confusion.

'Why is this happening all of a sudden?'

I felt like there was a hodgepodge of emotions surging within me. I was so swayed that even I was surprised by my own reaction. I tried biting my lips hard or tapping my thighs, but I didn't feel any changes. Tears rolled down from one of my eyes. I tried to cover it with my hand, but Jin Cheong noticed it.

'Damn it. Why am I crying so often?'

The fact that my overflowing emotions were flooding out of me at once did not feel good at all. I thought I didn't need to feel anxious or surprised, but my body was reacting by itself regardless of my will.

I knew this would happen, and I had decided to be understanding, including how Kim Hyun-Sung had gotten involved in *that* incident. I believed he had his own reasons for getting involved in it, and there had to be something unknown to me.

Despite that, a part of me felt betrayed. I couldn't stop myself from feeling that way, as the feeling was coming from deep inside me.

'Didn't we agree on making this life different from the last one?'

If I had to make an excuse for Kim Hyun-Sung, I could definitely come up with many reasons, like perhaps he had no choice but to go along the flow and follow the decision of the majority. It would make sense, after all, he had become a noble after joining Charlotte's faction.

I wasn't sure exactly what "elimination" meant, but it could have been a choice he had made to say goodbye to the Empire.

It could've been a decision to simply give Charlotte power. It could also be related to the survival of the Empire or the entire continent. It could also be related to the reason Kim Hyun-Sung didn't want to see Charlotte become the empress.

If I were in his shoes, I would've agreed to the plan as well.

'Of course, only if it's a reasonable plan… '

I did feel bad about the incident that the masked hero and Park Deok-Gu had experienced, but it was hard for a nation to understand the situation of every single individual within its territory.

Kim Hyun-Sung's political skills were abysmal, so it was possible that he had simply fallen for a trap. Of course, I didn't agree with the idea of killing people or massacring an entire city, but I came to the conclusion that Kim Hyun-Sung had to have ended up in a situation he couldn't avoid.

'So that bastard… no, it's strange that I'm even thinking about this. It was all over, so why did I even see that?'

The timing was too random for me to say that it was done on purpose, and I couldn't understand why I had to keep watching this random scene all while being confused about it. What if Lee Ki-Young of the first life wanted me to see this and understand it?

'Why?'

Even if the scenes had truly appeared randomly, I couldn't shake off the feeling that there was a reason behind their appearance.

'Do you want me to be hostile toward Kim Hyun-Sung?'

'Do you want me to avenge you? Are you going this far because, unlike what you intended, Kim Hyun-Sung is living a happy life, and it's making you jealous, you dirty demon?'

Kim Hyun-Sung was feeling sad because of the recent incident, but he was living a pretty happy life. Well, he *did* stab the stomach of his best friend. He was living a life full of guilt, and he seemed to be mentally ill as well. To make matters worse, he couldn't even take his own life, which made him feel even guiltier and sad.

However, overall, Kim Hyun-Sung of this life was…

'…Happy.'

I did feel kind of bad for him, but the bigger picture—Yeah, he was happy.

'He is happy, right? He probably wasn't suffering. Hm. Yeah, let's just say he's happy. Did the demon of the past appear because it was annoyed by how happy Kim Hyun-Sung was right now?'

Perhaps my subconscious was trying to tell me something?

I couldn't tell, but one thing I was sure of was…

'I'm still the same old me.'

Nothing had changed, and I wasn't really thinking too much about it.

The plan was still the same, and the situation didn't change either.

'You stupid demon. Masked hero, my ass.'

I was annoyed that the masked demon was trying to influence my actions, but I felt relieved about it as well.

If the masked demon's goal was revenge, then it had a reason for staying in my subconscious and showing me these things. It was a fact that was enough to convince me to stay in my current position.

I had full control of my body and mind; all he was doing right now was provoking me. He was trying to bait me because I was in control. Even if Lucifer was behind all

this rather than the masked demon, it didn't really matter, as it was still applicable.

Light Ki-Young had opened the door of truth and was following the light of justice.

The masked demon and its underlings were blocking my path out of anxiousness.

Naturally, I was calming myself down. My breathing became rough, and I was crying, but I grabbed the table with both hands. After a while, I felt everything returning to normal.

And that was when I heard Jin Cheong's voice.

— You seem to have a lot on your mind. Do you need a break? If you do…

"No, I'm fine. How could I ever thank you for your kindness… You're such a gentleman," I said mockingly.

— I'm not trying to empathize with your personal problems. I just want to end it on a good note. So… how was it?

"What do you mean?" I asked.

— Me in my first life.

"What? You bastard!" I shouted.

— Did it really happen?

"…"

— I had my doubts, but since the situation turned out this way, it's hard not to believe it.

"…"

— It looks like you don't remember everything. Aren't you the one behind the regression? Can you only see fragments of it? Or… is there a different trigger to it? It's an interesting story. It's none of my business how this happened or how you ended up knowing that information, but… it's certainly interesting.

‘You crazy bastard. So annoying.’

— It's natural, so there's no need to find it so strange. You said so yourself; I was simply *testing the waters*, as you mentioned that this was the second life and that a third life may be possible. The fact that you seemed to be ruminating something with a blank face seems like you've discovered the truth. I obviously didn’t think you’d fall for it *this* easily, but I guess you were simply *that* anxious.

Jin Cheong seemed to be really enjoying this. For a second, I thought he was the one who had set up the trap, but the only emotion I saw on his face was excitement. He had nothing to do with the phenomena I had experienced just now.

“Think whatever you want,” I said.

— What did I look like?

‘He’s already convinced.’

“How should I know?” I questioned.

— I’ll ask again. What did I look like?

“…”

—…

Perhaps it didn't matter even if I told him. It wasn't like he could do anything about it.

“You died… as my slave in your first life…” I answered.

— Lee Ki-Young, you bastard. I’m asking a serious question.

“And I answered seriously. I’m just telling you what I saw…” I said.

—…

“I don’t know exactly what happened, but I saw you serving me coffee. You sometimes turned into a human chair for me. You'd even let me hit you sometimes whenever I was stressed out. When it was time to eat, you’d get down under the

table like a dog and eat the fodder—no, the bread I would throw at you sometimes…" I explained.

— Lee Ki-Young.

"Does it look like I'm lying?" I asked.

— Lee Ki-Young!!

"I'm telling the truth, damn it! I'm being serious!" I shouted.

— What?

"I was shocked as well when I saw it… *Ha*… Even thinking about it now…" I paused.

— What… the hell…

"You were below human," I added.

— That can't be…

"It was a joke, so no need to look so serious," I told him.

He didn't shout at me, but his face told me that he wanted to call me a bastard.

—…

"You were dying," I said.

— Is that right?

"It was similar to our current situation. Before you died, you were playing the same game we played when we first met and talked about many different things. It really doesn't matter, even if you don't know about it. I don't know how you died, so don't ask me about it.

"If I have to guess, I'd say you probably fell for another trap like an idiot. It's pretty obvious. Your arrogance led you to your grave," I explained.

—…

Jin Cheong moved his troops slowly.

“You weren’t a demon summoner back then, which means you died as a soldier of the Republic. It was probably an honorable death, but it’s ironic that I was by your side…

"*Ah!* Don’t assume that I backstabbed you in your past life. I was working with my noona in that life, so we probably took turns backstabbing you,” I added.

It was the same for me.

“It seemed like we ran into each other quite a lot because you were aware of our existence. You used us, and I think we allowed you to take advantage of us… Well, it wasn’t obvious on the outside, but I’m sure we were constantly playing mind games, which was a game you really loved to play,” I said.

—…

“There weren’t any big changes,” I said.

— Is that right?

“You must be curious,” I commented.

— I’m just curious. There’s no other reason.

“So why are you curious?” I asked.

— Do I need to tell you?

“Do you have a mental illness, Commander? I’m not really in the position to give you advice, though,” I told him.

— You and I are different, you fool.

Jin Cheong didn't stop moving his pieces while talking to me.

Jung Jin-Ho and Kim Hyun-Sung swung their swords at each other with the intention of killing each other.

The battle was coming to an end.

Jin Cheong wasn't all that different from me. He didn't keep his eyes off of the game board even while mumbling.

'This bastard is really… '

I was honestly getting bored. I was playing along with him, and I had to think hard to give him what he wanted, but I got bored upon realizing the outcome of this game.

He seemed like he was aware of that as well, but he didn't bother commenting on it. However, he kept ordering his troops to advance as if his goal was to win this game. Just like the end of this life and the first life, I already knew what he was going to choose.

The allied troops resisted hard, but they were forced to be on the defensive. Just then, Jin Cheong revealed a satisfied look as he started talking in front of his troops, who were about to face the final battle.

— Honor.

"Yes."

— What I want is honor, not revenge.

"…"

He looked kind of nervous.

— Keep… your promise.

"Of course I will. You made the right choice, Commander," I said.

— Keep your promise…

CHAPTER 832
THE LAST (65)

“Of course, I’ll keep my promise,” I said.

—…

“I honestly expected it, but I’d just like to tell you that you made the right choice. I’ll do my best so you won’t regret it, and we’ll both profit from it,” I added.

—…

“I always strive for customer satisfaction…”

— Enough…

“Have you thought of any other methods? How much information do you know?” I asked.

— That’s an issue you need to resolve by yourself. I’d like to hear the deal you have in mind that’ll earn both of us some profit.

“Relax, Commander. *Ah*, please remove your troops as well. If you could also return Deok-Gu, I’d appreciate it. If you’re worried, you can just return Deok-Gu.

"Is this really necessary when I’m in the process of finding a way that’ll satisfy both of us? We need to trust each other to establish a genuine relationship… If you act oppressive like this, I’ll start thinking you don’t trust me…” I said.

— I don’t trust you. Who would trust you?

“Why are you trying to pick a fight? We’re doing this for both of us. Deok-Gu, make him another cup of coffee,” I ordered.

— I don’t need it.

“Your penchant for doing something like that is what hurts people, Commander. The fact that you’re rejecting my kindness is making me sad,” I said.

— Bullshit. I’m not here to play games with you, Lee Ki-Young. These troops are insurance in case you pull something.

“H-Here you go… Mr. Demon Summoner…” Park Deok-Gu stammered.

Jin Cheong looked at me as he drank the coffee that Park Deok-Gu had made for him. Seeing that he frowned after drinking it, he definitely did not like the taste of the coffee. He placed the coffee on one side and started drinking his tea once again.

“Is that really necessary? This deal is for our benefit, Commander. People like us go crazy over things like this. No one will lose anything, and we’ll both get what we want,” I said.

— I won’t deny it, but…

“I'm the continent’s best honorary consultant, but even I can't find a way to improve your current public image. Miss Sora?” I called out.

“*Ah*, yes? Han Sora answered.

“I want you to log on to Benigoa Net right now, search posts related to the Commander, and read them out loud,” I ordered.

“R-Right… now?” she asked.

“Yes. Just find a decent post or one with the highest views,” I answered.

“Do I… really have to read it?” she questioned.

“Yes, don’t skip anything and read it,” I replied.

“Okay.”

Han Sora nodded quietly and took out her Goddess’ Hand Mirror.

Naturally, I took out my own hand mirror and was astonished by what I saw.

'What's this?'

[My Post]

[Title: It's a bit awkward to write something like this in these trying times, but… I think an elf had confessed to me. Actually, I'm not really sure. I need your guy's advice. (Replies: 1,024)]

[Posted By: I Like Blue]

[I know that many people are worried about what's happening right now, but I have no one to talk to about my mixed feelings, so I'm posting this here to vent. Basically, I think an elf confessed to me. I can't tell you the details, but I believe they're a high-ranking elf of the Everia Kingdom.

[We haven't really spent a lot of time with each other. We'd only see each other whenever there was an important meeting; we rarely ate or drank tea together. Of course, I didn't think he had feelings for me. Here's what happened…

[His younger sister… *omitted…* told me, "I don't think it's ridiculous for me to have feelings for you." I couldn't say anything after hearing that, but now isn't a good time to have relationships. However, I don't know how to tell him that.

[Would it be better to reject him officially? Or would it be better to tell him after everything is over? I know this is the worst time to reject him, but I'm worried he might think that I'm ignoring him. I'm waiting for answers from those knowledgeable about elves.]

[Unidentified ID: How annoying. Why don't you write your own novel? *Hehehehe*]

[I LIke Blue: What?]

[Unidentified ID: This would be considered a well-written novel, but it's so boring. Stop joking around. Aren't you the one who made those fabricated posts? And now you're saying that an elf has confessed to you. Listen, if you want to write a novel, you should put more thought into it.

[Everia is currently on lockdown, so how could you meet a high-ranking elf? *Hehehe*. It's so ridiculous that I can't stop laughing. *Hehehe*]

[Lindel Villager: Considering the times… posting something like this… is a bit too much. I do not agree with Unidentified ID, but posting something like this when Everia is oppressing the adventurers and tourists of the continent… makes you look like you can't read the room.]

[I Like Blue: I wrote this post because I wanted to get advice. As you said, we're not in the best situation, so I'm trying to get advice on how I should act… I'm not trying to make you angry, and it's not like I'm unaware of the current situation.]

[Dirty Spoon: This person did write a lot of fabricated posts a long time ago. They posted that one theory about memory loss…]

[I Like Blue: It's not fabricated information.]

[Unidentified ID: Here's a *dislike* from me.]

[Nanananananan: An elf also confessed to me… Although there were some difficulties due to cultural differences, I'm now in a good relationship with one of them. There is a bit of an age gap… Anyway, if you decide to reject them, don't be too harsh. If their confession fails, they tend to take their own life…]

[I Like Blue: What? Is that true?]

[Nature Lover: Reported as a controversial post. ^^;;]

'Why did she… '

I immediately figured out that this wasn't my hand mirror.

It seemed like she had made this post right after *that* incident.

I wanted to look at the replies and Jo Hye-Jin's reaction, but it felt wrong.

For some reason, I felt guilty, and it seemed like I was opening Pandora's Box.

'Let's move on for now.'

My customer was the top priority here.

Honorary Consultant Lee Ki-Young was a professional who considered his customers

his top priority.

'She's really… '

I cleared my throat out of embarrassment, and it was a good thing that Han Sora finally spoke, "'Jin Cheong? *Ah*… that demon-summoning bastard?' D-Do I have to read the swear words as well?"

—…

"Don't hide anything and be transparent. That's the motto of our company," I answered.

"I'm a guild master managing a small-sized guild in the Republic. Of course, I've worked with that demon-summoning bastard. I even ate dinner with him. It's funny. Back then, I thought he was the one who would lead the Republic and change us…" Han Sora paused.

'Cheongie doesn't look happy.'

"'In the end, he was just greedy, and it was all an act. The fact that I had been following him around after falling for his tricks wakes me up at night. Demon-summoning bastard. He died before paying for his sins… I hope that bastard suffers in the afterlife. Deceiver. Fraud. Dirty demon summoner,'" Han Sora added.

—…

"D-Do you want me to read the comments?" she asked.

"Honesty! Transparency!" I shouted.

"'Okay. I did work under Jin Cheong a little bit… He was all talk and no action. He pretended like he was different, special, above everyone, and looked down on the world. At that time, I really thought he was different, but… '" Han Sora trailed off.

"Buuut?" I said.

"'Who would have known that his uniqueness had come from a contract with a demon?'" Han Sora continued.

“That’s the public opinion… Please continue, Miss Sora,” I ordered.

“There are replies siding with the Commander,” Han Sora said.

—…

“There are posts from people daring to call him a demon-summoning bastard. The next reply… is a… picture… they’re collaged and drawn pictures… There are pictures of the Commander’s face attached to the body of a demon… D-Do I need to show it?” Han Sora asked.

“No. Let's not show that for our client's mental health,” I answered.

Obviously, Jin Cheong was frowning.

“Anyway, that’s how it is, Commander,” I said.

— It’s all your…

‘You’re getting angry again.’

“No, Commander. I actually ran around for your honor until the organization arrived and ruined my plan—your second image improvement plan.

"It was progressing smoothly, but… Anyway, I’m sure you feel wronged, and I completely understand that. Unfortunately, it's not often that we can have our cake and eat it too. That’s exactly what happened. I didn’t expect it either,” I explained.

Jin Cheong looked like he was out of breath.

“It’s pretty obvious when you look at how the public's opinion of you had changed before and after the organization appeared. It’s not that I didn’t keep my promise. It was more like I *couldn’t* keep my promise.

"I’ll prove your innocence, Commander. I’ll prove that Commander Jin Cheong was a true hero who had sacrificed himself for this land,” I added.

— You don’t need to sugarcoat things, nor do I need you to represent me. You don’t need to prove that I was a hero, nor do you need to do anything more than that. I just want you to reveal that I was not a demon summoner.

“Will that be enough?” I asked.

— I…

“Let’s do something more than that. You won’t be disappointed either,” I suggested. At this point, it was better to make sure that things were done right. Park Deok-Gu had noticed something strange because I saw him looking at Jin Cheong quietly.

“What are you talking about? Are you saying that Commander Jin Cheong wasn’t a demon summoner?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“…”

“Wait, how can that… be possible? What’s… going on…” Park Deok-Gu mumbled.

“It’s a long story, Deok-Gu. One thing I’m sure of… is that the Commander is fighting the demon inside him even now…” I told him.

— Nonsense…

“Miss Sora, I want you to broadcast what is happening here to the continent!” I ordered.

— Don’t do anything useless, Lee Ki-Young! I’m warning you!

Jung Ha-Yan moved even faster than Han Sora, and it only took her a few seconds to show everything that was happening here to the entire continent. Jung Ha-Yan seemed to have thought that it would be better for us to see the reaction of the denizens because she allowed us to see the situation outside.

The denizens were staring at the colossal Goddess’ Mirror in mid-air with a blank expression. They were curious about what was happening and why Holy Spear Jo Hye-Jin of the Blue Guild was sitting in front of Demon Summoner Jin Cheong, who was supposed to be dead.

Many people revealed fearful looks upon seeing Jin Cheong, and they started mumbling his name while trembling all over. Jin Cheong wanted his innocence to be proven, but he seemed to be telling me that this wasn't the method he had in mind.

However, he couldn’t say anything right now, as the entire continent was watching

us. I placed both of my hands on my chest and spoke desperately, “Y-You must overcome it, Commander. You can do it!”

— Damn it…

“You can fight the demon. You told me yourself! You said you would overcome it and fight together with the light!” I shouted.

Naturally, I started crying.

‘This is Hye-Jin's debut.’

I had to put more emotion into my acting.

“Please… *Heuk…* Please come back. Commander… you must overcome it! You must maintain the small light in your heart,” I added.

Jin Cheong knew he had no choice, so he started talking.

‘Why do you look so embarrassed?’’

— I've already been consumed by the darkness—Daughter chosen by the light.

It seemed that he had no talent in acting.

— D-Damn it… Damn it… Damn it…

CHAPTER 833
THE LAST (66)

'At least he's quick-witted.'

Jin Cheong had abysmal talent in acting, but he seemed to know exactly what I wanted him to say and how he was supposed to act without me giving him a script.

'Nice.'

The fact that he could play along was enough for me to give him a round of applause. Of course, he was frowning. He looked like he was regretting it and was questioning whether this was really necessary or not.

Overall, he seemed extremely humiliated.

At first, I thought he'd just hide from the cameras, but it seemed that he wasn't going to do that, as he definitely knew that this was the best way to go about it. He had to be worried, as he had no idea when we would backstab him, but I was sure he was relieved by what I had done.

After all, the best way to expose something was to reveal it to the public. I'd even earn some holy power that way.

I glanced over at Park Deok-Gu and saw that he was staring at Jin Cheong as if the latter were pitiful.

'It's understandable.'

Park Deok-Gu had been calling him "demon summoner" all this while, and he had even said many mean comments about Jin Cheong. Park Deok-Gu seemed confused about the current situation, and the denizens were definitely confused as well.

This was great, as I would be able to give him a backstory.

As expected, I saw Park Deok-Gu nodding quietly.

“W-What are you say… Then…” Park Deok-Gu stuttered.

“…”

“Was all of this a misunderstanding?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

‘You think it’s as simple as a misunderstanding? I’ll set up a really cool scene.’

It was a setting and role that I had been saving for this moment.

Well, it was honestly a waste to use on Jin Cheong, but I had no choice.

“It’s a simple misunderstanding, Mr. Park Deok-Gu,” I replied.

“Hyung…”

‘Don’t call me hyung-nim, damn it.’

“I-I mean… H-Hye-Jin noonim…” Park Deok-Gu muttered.

Yeah, I was Jo Hye-Jin right now. I was the same Hye-Jin who loved justice more than anyone else. The same Hye-Jin who loved the Blue Guild a lot and the same Hye-Jin who would sometimes make posts asking for advice on Benigoa Net.

“The Commander has been fighting a hidden battle,” I said.

“What… do you…”

“The Commander has been fighting a fight that has never been revealed to the world until now. He's been fighting behind the scenes as a Shadow of the Light, and he’s been fighting against the demons while in constant pain.

"He's been fighting in a place hidden from everyone's eyes. Despite knowing that his body will crumble to dust, the Commander has been fighting all this while. He definitely knew that this would happen. He definitely knew that he would someday…” I trailed off.

“W-Wait… that’s…” Park Deok-Gu stuttered.

I could just give a proper explanation later and go with this for now.

“Despite knowing that he'd be consumed by the demons someday!” I shouted.

Let us shed some tears and have some of them fly into the air.

‘This is why I like Hye-Jin’s face.’

Jo Hye-Jin looked trustworthy, and her face was very apropos for the ongoing situation. The dialogue was kind of cheesy, but that was exactly why this situation was so great. Let us use our acting skills and sincere voice to get people engaged in this dramatic situation.

We had to show Park Deok-Gu's face as well, who looked like he had realized everything. I mean, just look at him. He had figured out why I was so confused. The confusion I felt and the tears I shed were to empathize with the life that Jin Cheong had been living so far.

'That’s right, Deok-Gu. I think you picked the right answer.'

“I-Is that true? Then… w-why…” Park Deok-Gu questioned.

“The Commander wanted to be a symbol,” I answered.

“A symbol…” Park Deok-Gu repeated.

“He had chosen to become the symbol of fear. I still remember the conversation that the sub guild master and Commander Jin Cheong—I mean, the Son of Light and the Shadow of Light had long ago. It was a story that was supposed to remain hidden from the continent and was supposed to be buried forever.

"You remember as well, don’t you? There’s no way you've forgotten it,” I asked.

— I… I…

‘Ah, this idiot is having a hard time playing along.’

Jin Cheong seemed confused.

‘Ah, he’s struggling. He can’t keep up. Did the Daughter of Light's remark hit the nail on the head? Or are you just feeling extremely humiliated?’

“W-What’s this conversation you’re referring to?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“Damn it, Deok-Gu. I love you.’

“It was a contract. He had been consumed by a demon, so he had made a request never to attempt any cleansing of his name. The Commander wanted to remain as the demon summoner. He wanted the shadow that had fought against the demon all his life to remain a shadow even after his death.

"And that was the last time I saw him. He wanted to… carry all the burden and remain as the symbol of evil… as a laughingstock… as the traitor of humankind—all to unify the continent,” I answered.

—…

‘What’s with that face… Join the program, man.’

“This… is nonsense… Can such a ridiculous reality exist… This doesn’t make any sense,” Park Deok-Gu remarked.

“That’s the reality, and we should not deny it. Perhaps the continent had made a mistake long ago, which led to the demons seizing Commander Jin Cheong's soul. It’s our fault for ignoring his honor and burying his final moments. Commander, I've been living life with the words you've left carved deeply in my heart,” I told him.

—…

“You told me it was nothing,” I added.

“…”

“You said your sacrifice was nothing compared to how much the Son of Light has contributed to the continent. You said that it was all your fault, as you lost to a demon. You said it was all your fault, so you'll allow yourself to become the "demon summoner." You said you would live the rest of your life as a shadow. B-But… this ending is too miserable. I’m sure the sub guild master wouldn’t want to see you like this either,” I added.

“…”

“I’m sure the Son of Light wants you to walk towards the path of light as well,” I said.

‘Start it, Deok-Gu!’

“I-I’m sure that’s what hyung-nim wants! H-He probably didn’t expect this…” Park Deok-Gu chimed in.

“…”

“Hey, Commander! You can do it. You said you've been fighting those demons all your life! I-I’m sure it was hard for you to get out of it. H-Hey, I’m sorry. I’m really sorry for insulting you and calling you "demon summoner" without knowing the whole story,” Park Deok-Gu continued.

Park Deok-Gu was crying, and the way he spoke with so much emotion was so good that I wanted to applaud him for it. His sincere face was screaming that he was regretting the comments he had made against Jin Cheong, and he seemed to be genuinely repenting for what he had done.

Tears welled up in Jin Cheong’s eyes.

“I believe in you, Commander,” Han Sora said.

“C-Commander, it’s okay now. Y-You don’t have to hide in the shadows any longer,” Jung Ha-Yan said.

‘Nice dialogue.’

Of course, I wish Jung Ha-Yan would just stay quiet.

“The continent can become one. Even the sub guild master has been talking about it. Yes, it was what you wanted, and it was your final wish, but he was really heartbroken by the fact that he couldn’t show your true nature to the continent. He knew you were very adamant about that, but he also knew that you had your own reasons,” I explained.

—…

"However, I'm sure he really wanted to turn you into an honorable person, Commander. I mean, look,” I said.

A tear rolled down from one of my eyes.

“The continent can become one,” I said.

I glanced at the camera. Our Hye-Jin’s debut had to be perfect.

“We've managed to protect the continent from big threats, prophecies of the end, and demons wearing angel masks. I-It was thanks to you, Commander,” I stuttered.

I couldn't cry too hard, or it'd make me look too emotional to the point that everyone might think that it was fake. I decided to just shed a few tears and say only a few lines that were commonly said in dramas.

It was okay to choke up while crying as well. After all, the denizens of the Republic were already going crazy from the revelation. After all, they had always been overwhelmingly patriotic However, the same could not be said for others.

“It was thanks to the secret organization of the Republic and you… who protected the continent in the shadows!” I shouted.

They’d definitely go even crazier with that line. As expected, the denizens of the Republic were fully immersed. The elderly were crying, and I could hear them muttering here and there.

- The Commander has never been a demon summoner!

- The Shadow of Light! He's always been the Unknown Hero of the Continent!

‘I have to manipulate the public opinion using the Republic as the center of it and keep a close eye on Benigoa Net. I just have to do those two things, and his image as Demon Summoner Jin Cheong would disappear in just a year.

- The Commander isn’t a demon summoner. Commander Jin Cheong is!

- I knew it. I-I told you. I said he wasn’t a demon summoner… I was sure of it…

- Don’t lose! Commander Jin Cheong! Don’t lose to the demon!

- The Five Tiger Generals of the Republic! The hope and light of the Republic! This is the Republic you've protected!

‘Wow, these Republican bastards are really patriotic.’

They were more patriotic than the denizens of the Sacred Democratic Country, and they were so full of pride that they were the epitome of patriotism. At this point, they'd definitely force themselves to believe in my words, even if I were to tell them myself that I was just pranking them.

Why? It was all because they’d been pretty stressed out recently.

The Sacred Democratic Country and the Republic had been rivals since time immemorial. The Sacred Democratic Country had created two heroes who had protected the continent, but the Republic had never witnessed the birth of a hero.

They had invested a ton of resources and manpower with the determination to protect the continent and their pride in their nation, but they were forgotten because of the Son of Light’s sacrifice and the Sunset Swordsman's attack that split the sky.

When the named beings of the Sacred Democratic Country gave strength to the light, the named beings of the Republic were busy summoning demons and colluding with them. Obviously, the higher-ups and the denizens' pride had been injured quite greatly due to the actions of their named beings.

However, it was all going to change from now on.

Jin Cheong had never been a demon summoner.

‘This is how you rebuild your image.’

Jin Cheong was the Hero of Shadows, and he had been fighting demons behind the scenes. The demons had managed to take over him, while the secret organization that he had been managing behind the scenes was busy.

However, he fought until the end.

And in the end, he had to abandon his honor for the continent's sake.

‘It’s pretty cool. Hero of Shadows.’

I could understand why the denizens of the Republic were going crazy over this, and the topic rose to the top of Benigoa Net's hot topics. All I could see were posts from

people cheering on Jin Cheong.

Of course, there were many great reactions to Jo Hye-Jin's debut as well.

- Commander!

'This is a spectacular view.'

- We've always believed in you, Commander.

'They changed their minds so fast.'

- We knew you've never been a demon summoner, Commander…

'They insulted him so much not that long ago… '

- Commander! Hang in there! The denizens of the Republic will cheer and pray for you.

'Oh my… '

- We've always believed in you, damn it!

Everyone had become one.

Even if the scene felt humiliating to him, and even if he told me that this wasn't right and that this wasn't what he wanted… he definitely had no choice.

I shed a few more tears and slammed my hand on the table before saying a pretty cringey line.

"Shadow cannot exist without light. There's still light inside you."

Jin Cheong found himself in a corner and grabbed his head.

— *Kgh… kggh… kgggh…*

To be honest…

— *Gaaah…!*

I wanted to hide in a hole.

I saw Jin Cheong's eyes quiver amidst all this.

CHAPTER 834
THE LAST (67)

Jin Cheong's eyes were shaking so much that I thought there was an ongoing earthquake.

'Why does he look so pitiful all of a sudden?'

He even looked at me as if asking if he was doing well. I was sure he knew what he needed to do to continue this story and the stance he had to take for it. He had to take on a behavior appropriate to the result.

— *Kgh… kgh…*

"You can do it! Everyone believes in you! They're all cheering for you! They're all waiting for you to return to your normal self! Is there… Is there anything I can do… to help?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

— *Gaaah…* Damn it… G-G-Get out of my head… you… de… de…

He was doing pretty well, but he didn't seem that confident about it and was even questioning whether he was doing it right or not. He looked so nervous that he seemed out of place.

'He's really driving me crazy. Why is he so bad at acting?'

He was a worse actor than Dialugia.

Actually, she had reached the peak of her acting career when she acted as the Plague Dragon, so it was pointless to compare him to her. I wasn't sure why he was acting this way when he was usually good at hiding his emotions, but it was so bad that I couldn't even comment on it. The way he was expressing his emotions was so bad that this role and story I had created seemed like it was wasted on him.

I even gave him the title—Hero of Shadows.

‘Focus. Stop feeling embarrassed and focus, damn it. Does this look like a joke to you? Do you know how much I’ve put on the line for this?’

Perhaps I had made a mistake giving him the Hero of Shadows title.

I cast a desperate look at Director Han Sora. As someone who had learned many filming techniques through experience, the current situation had to have looked like a crisis in her eyes. She started moving the hand mirror while biting her lips. I was sure it was to deliver the urgency of the situation as well as to hide Jin Cheong’s awkward expression.

'You know that you have to add noises to the ambient sound, right? Static noises and a demon-like voice have to be added.'

It seemed that Han Sora was already a professional, as she took care of that for me even without me saying it to her. The situation improved thanks to special effects, but it wasn’t enough to cover Jin Cheong's awkward expression. Perhaps I should have come up with a simpler scenario that didn’t require acting skills and emotions.

— *Kgh…* I won’t lose.

‘Lose what? What are you talking about? What the hell are you not going to lose?’

I couldn’t help but tap my thigh because my script was turning into trash. If it hadn't been for Park Deok-Gu, who was trying to help Jin Cheong somehow, this would’ve failed a long time ago.

“H-Hyung-nim! This…” Park Deok-Gu shouted.

“Commander! Protect your pride!”

— *Kgh… gah… hahaha…*

“The demon is trying to come out. The dirty demon that has taken everything from Commander Jin Cheong is coming out! Shouldn’t we save him? I can’t let the Hero of Shadows, who had been protecting the continent behind the scenes, get devoured by a demon just like this,” Park Deok-Gu said.

— Damn it… damn it… damn it… Lee Ki-Young…

‘The emotion just now was good.’

— *Kgh*… No one… can stop me.

Why was his dialogue so cliched?

“No, you can overcome it, Commander. I’ll be with you. The sub guild master once said this, 'The light that creates the shadow is really small, but it shines brighter than anything else,'” Park Deok-Gu said.

'You’re supposed to have confidence when using that kind of line. Emotions are the reason why those dialogues in cheap dramas are working. We’re actually putting our lives on the line here, and it gives our words power.'

People were watching because this was reality, and we could actually die.

Of course, Hye-Jin’s appearance was only a part of the reason behind her effective acting, but it didn't mean that Jin Cheong could abandon his appearance. He had to hide that he was feeling embarrassed, or the audience would feel second-hand embarrassment.

Jin Cheong needed to have more confidence.

I tried to provide him with a slightly cheesy dialogue, but there was no way to save his acting. In the end, I had no choice but to continue, but it left a bitter taste in my mouth.

And that was when Director Han made a bold decision.

‘Woah.’

She lowered the camera and showed everyone the dummy world. I saw the huge demon army heading toward the few remaining humans. The Army of Light had nowhere else to retreat, so they gathered and prepared to face the demons.

— Forward, army of demons!

The camera was zoomed in so close that it didn't feel like we were still playing a game. It felt like we were fighting a war in another dimension rather than playing a game. I couldn't hear any other noises, but some sound effects had been edited into

the battlefield, which made everyone feel terrified.

“We must win, Army of Light! Winning this battle is the only way we can save the Commander from darkness,” I said.

— Y-You think things will go your way… Just give up…

“We will never give up on you, Commander. It’s not just us. The denizens of the Republic, the heroes of the Democratic Country who are currently fighting, and everyone who protects the continent won’t give up on you, Commander,” I told him.

— Damn it… Why should I… Damn it…

“Forward, Army of Light!” I shouted.

A huge beam of light poured down.

[Sunset Swordsman Kim Hyun-Sung is smiling brightly. He said he knew you would be watching. He wants to fight the last fight together. He’s anxious because he doesn’t know how this story is going to end, but he’s willing to follow the player if that’s what the player wants.]

‘I need to do something about that bug of his. Noona, you should’ve fixed him when you made it. But using a dummy world like this isn’t so bad.’

I thought it would be a good idea to run a few tests.

[Kim Hyun-Sung roars!]

[The soldiers of the Human Faction are surprised. The beam of light has encouraged everyone. The troops of the Human Faction aren’t asking the player for advice. They say it's going to be the final battle. They say that the battle between light and darkness is about to begin.

[Everyone roars. The army smacks their shields, stomps forward, and sings a song of victory for the final battle.]

“Let’s go!”

“Let’s go! Let’s save the Commander!”

[The Demon Faction is moving. Rumbling noises could be heard deep within the ground, but the Human Faction is not trembling in fear. They are shouting that the warm light falling from the sky will guide them on the right path.]

— Kill them all. K-Kill them all!

'You're not being serious, right?'

[The final battle is starting. The final battle that will mark a page in history and will remain forever in the history of this continent has begun!]

The sight of the demons enveloped in darkness, and the army enveloped in light clashing was so remarkable that I couldn't quite describe it.

The holy knights resisted the demons with furious roars while the undead attacked the allied infantry. This wasn't a battle of tactic and strategy. This was a desperate battle between dark and light.

My hands would have started sweating if I were unaware of the context behind this fight.

Needless to say, the denizens reacted fiercely to the fight.

Battles and wars were taking place all over the continent. Some were fighting, and some were idle, but everyone felt the same way. They had faith that the light was going to win, that darkness would eventually kneel before the light, and that they'd overcome this crisis once again.

- Please… I beg you.

- Don't lose! Damn it! Teach those demons a lesson!

- The Son of Light is with you!

I saw denizens praying everywhere, and everyone expected the Human Faction to win the war.

- Don't lose! Democratic Country! Look at the Army of Light pushing the Demon Army back! We'll win together! The Son of Light is watching over us.

- Hang in there. Everyone, don't be afraid and look at the sky! Our comrades who protected the continent together are also shedding their blood elsewhere. Our victory will give them a lot of strength.

Obviously, there wasn't a need to tell them that this was fake because it was really effective. This battle gave everyone hope and courage. It was a noble battle that would encourage everyone to fight.

The soldiers were desperate, but the dummies that were enveloped in light didn't seem to be afraid. Their faith, thinking that God would watch over them, was so strong that they were willing to give up their lives.

"Commander!" I called out.

—…

"Keep it together, Commander," I said.

— *Kgh.*

"You're the only one who can end this war. The sub guild master said the same thing," I said.

— I…

It was kind of sad that he still wasn't immersed in the situation, but the situation was so good that it made up for his poor acting skills. Jin Cheong glanced over at the denizens of the Republic who were praying and the people cheering him on.

He grabbed his head as soon as the light shone down on him.

The scene was good, and his figure reacting to the light was captured, but there was a limit to how much he could express that.

I wasn't good at anything else, but I was good at shooting light, so I slowly infused him with a radiant blooming light.

Jin Cheong had to have realized that it was time because he blushed and started talking.

— I… I won’t lose. I won’t surrender to the dirty evil!

“…”

I felt uncomfortable with how he was staring straight at me while saying that line, but it wasn't bad at all.

— I’m Jin Cheong of the Republic. You really think I’ll surrender to something like this?

However, his dialogue was definitely cliched. Of course, cliched lines weren't bad— no, cliched lines were great. Perhaps it just sounded bad in my ears because it was coming from Jin Cheong himself.

Moreover, introducing himself as Jin Cheong of the Republic was kind of—

No, I had to play along.

“Yes, you are Jin Cheong. The same Jin Cheong who fought demons all your life and wants to protect the continent even after death,” I said.

— I’m Jin Cheong of the Republic, damn it… Damn it!

A massive light covered the Demon Army. The radiant scene of all the darkness being torn down by the light was so beautiful that I couldn't describe it with words.

[The Human Faction is witnessing a miracle. The soldiers were crying and screaming that the light was with them. The demons of the Demon Faction are starting to disappear.

[The power of the demons is weakening. Jung Jin-Ho laughs, sounding disappointed, but says that there will be another chance.]

[Kim Hyun-Sung, a named being of the Human Faction, is looking up at the sky. While looking at the light that was pouring down on them, he extends his hand out and quietly closes his eyes.]

“Commander…” I said.

— N-No one can tarnish… my pride… I won’t surrender to the dirty evil!

[The troops of the Human Faction are driving out the Demon Army. No, the Demon Faction is starting to collapse. The radiant light today will remain in everyone's hearts forever.]

"…"

[Everyone cheers, and the battle ends.]

And…

"And—h*uh?*" I said.

I felt myself floating upward.

"*Uh…*"

When I opened my eyes, I saw a space filled with a deafening silence.

CHAPTER 835
THE LAST (68)

"Ah..."

'I'm back.'

"..."

I couldn't get used to how the noisy space had become extremely quiet.

"Fathe—"

I looked toward the owner of the voice, and I saw Seraphim. It felt like it had been a while since I saw him. He looked up at me while holding a cup of coffee.

I took a sip of the coffee, but…

'It doesn't taste good.'

Seraphim was crying as he cleaned up the coffee that had fallen to the floor.

I didn't bother looking at him because Jo Hye-Jin covering her face with her hands had attracted my attention. Her face had turned really red, so she definitely was awake while I was in her body. I wasn't sure why she was embarrassed. Perhaps it was because I saw the post she had written on Benigoa Net, or perhaps her successful debut had moved her that much, but she definitely seemed out of it.

"Hye-Jin?" I called out.

- Shut up, you bastard…

Jo Hye-Jin's voice was low, but I could hear her clearly. She had cursed at me.

"What's wrong? It's a good thing," I told her.

- Please just shut…

She looked like she was about to cry.

“I’m pretty sure you’ll become a star. I mean, not many people know about you despite your achievements, and it's because we've never really promoted your achievements. If we…” I trailed off.

-…

“It won’t happen again, and everything that happened today will be posted on the forum you visit often… *Ah!* I just wanted to tell you that I accidentally opened your hand mirror. It wasn’t intentional. I mean, the things I saw weren’t important anyway.

"I would like to officially apologize, so please don’t give me a hard time. However, if you’re troubled about something, you should talk to a friend instead of posting it on a forum…” I suggested.

- Please… Please just shut up. Just…

“Get a grip. It’ll give the kids weird ideas, Hye-Jin,” I told her.

Honestly, it wasn’t *that* strange. People could question why she was behaving that way, but they could simply misunderstand her for being touched that the light had won. It seemed like she wasn’t aware that I had already ascended.

Jung Ha-Yan was quick-witted, so she did not move. Meanwhile, the slow-witted Park Deok-Gu was still overreacting, and he was contributing a lot to the chaos.

“Let me at least say goodbye. They’ll be sad if I don’t,” I said.

It seemed that Jo Hye-Jin had finally come back to her senses. She knew Ha-Yan and Deok-Gu would be disappointed if I disappeared without a word. She had to have realized that she needed to pull herself together because she was calming down.

“I’ll take care of the special effects, so say goodbye to them for me. It can be a simple goodbye. If you don’t know what to say, then—Actually, I’ll just let you take care of it. Do it quickly before Ha-Yan finds out,” I instructed her.

I had to show sympathy because she might be kind of mad at me. Jo Hye-Jin let out a sigh of exhaustion, and then she started fidgeting.

In the end, she nodded lightly. She seemed confused about what to say to them, but this was better than telling her what to do.

The way she got up and slowly turned her head was exceptional. It was like she was genuinely trying to defend me rather than acting it out. I was sure she knew everything. I was certain that Jo Hye-Jin, who was acting as Lee Ki-Young, knew what to say.

- I should get going.

The mood was kind of serious, but it was better than I thought.

- What are you talking about?

- Like I said, I need to get going. I've done everything that I could do here, and I don't really have a lot of time… I have a plan. I can't tell you the details, but I'll definitely come back, so no need to make a big deal out of it.

- R-R-Really?

- Of course…

"If you say it with full confidence, they'll just be really looking forward to it," I warned her.

- It was short, but I had a lot of fun in this body. It was nice seeing all of you doing well… and…

- N-N-No… n-n-no…

- I'm sure we'll see each other again, Ha-Yan.

- *Uh… uh… uh…*

Jung Ha-Yan was the problem. The pig was about to cry, but Jung Ha-Yan was already crying. She ran up to Jo Hye-Jin and hugged her tightly as if she did not want to let go.

I felt kind of sad seeing her like that.

Jo Hye-Jin was surprised when Jung Ha-Yan started crying out loud. However, she managed to compose herself quickly and started patting Jung Ha-Yan's head.

She tried to pull Jung Ha-Yan away from her, but the latter stuck to her like glue. I had no idea how she managed to withstand Jung Ha-Yabn's bear hug. I knew her strength was through her mana, but she had to have been exercising every day to nurture such core strength.

- *Heuuuung… kgh… heuuung…*

- I-I'm sure I'll be back soon.

- *Hiccup… kgh…* Don't go. Don't go… *hiccup…*

- M-Miss Jung Ha-Yan, don't do this. H-He said he'll be back soon.

- I'll be back as soon as possible.

- Don't go! D-D-Don't… *heuuung…* Don't go…

Jo Hye-Jin looked at her spear as if she were asking me what she had to do, but I couldn't really give her any instructions. All we could do was wait for Jung Ha-Yan's suppressor to calm her down. As expected, Han Sora started comforting her, but Jung Ha-Yan didn't seem to be calming down at all…

- He said he'll be back soon, so I'm sure he'll keep his promise. I'm sure this is hard for him as well, so… you should… let him go, Miss Jung Ha-Yan…

- *Heuuung…*

- Hey, this is probably hard for hyung-nim as well. I know how you feel, but… l-let's let him go. He said he's going to come back, and he can't really live in Hye-Jin noonim's body forever. He's saying he'll come back in his own body. Let's let him go… for now.

- That's right, Ha-Yan. I'll be back soon. You can wait for me, right?

Jung Ha-Yan shook her head, but…

- You'll wait for me, right?

Jo Hye-Jin asked.

Jung Ha-Yan nodded as if she had no choice.

She seemed to be expecting some kind of reward for waiting patiently, but of course, there was no way Jo Hye-Jin would catch that kind of hint. I saw Jo Hye-Jin patting Jung Ha-Yan's head again and fixing her clothes.

As Jo Hye-Jin wiped Jung Ha-Yan's tears away with her own hands, she made eye contact with the latter and spoke.

- Everything will be fine.

- I trust you, Ha-Yan.

- You believe me, right?

Jo Hye-Jin had said multiple lines that she wouldn't normally say, so Jung Ha-Yan had no choice but to nod.

I was satisfied with Jo Hye-Jin's performance.

"If I can do it…"

- If I can do it…

- I can do it better. I've heard it a million times. Stop making me cry and go. You're coming back anyway, right?

- Yeah, I'll see you later, you pig. Good job, Miss Sora.

- *Ah*, thank you, sir. Goodbye.

Jo Hye-Jin didn't say things like "I'm going now" or "I'm actually leaving now."

She simply closed her eyes, and a radiant light enveloped her briefly. Perhaps it would be good to let them know that she was back by tying her hair up again once she opened her eyes.

It seemed Jo Hye-Jin had the same thought as me because she tied her hair up.

- For a moment…

- Looks like he's really gone.

- I'm sure you've already heard, but he said he'll be back as soon as possible. He said he'll be back no matter what, and he sounds really sad as well.

- We heard it as well, but I'm still sad. *Oh*, but I'm not saying that I'm sad about you coming back, so don't misunderstand. I'm just sad that we can't be with him.

- I know.

- You did well, Hye-Jin noonim.

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan, you should…

- *Ah*… yeah…

- Are you okay, Miss Ha-Yan?

-…

- She'll be fine, right?

- Yeah…

Jung Ha-Yan didn't seem fine at all.

She wouldn't have been as needy as she was right now if I hadn't descended. There was nothing more annoying than giving out something, only to take it back moments later. I was sure Jung Ha-Yan felt that way right now.

Jung Ha-Yan suffered from frequent mood swings, so sadness instantly filled her up.

Han Sora pulled Jung Ha-Yan slowly away from Jo Hye-Jin.

Han Sora then patted Jung Ha-Yan's shoulder, and her shoulders trembled as she kept her head down.

Han Sora seemed really surprised because she could hear Jung Ha-Yan forcefully holding back her tears. Jung Ha-Yan kept wiping her tears that wouldn't stop falling from her eyes, and the sight convinced me that it'd take a few days before she'd stabilize.

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan…

-…

- H-Hang in there. He said he'll be back soon. If he doesn't, you can become the God of Magic, and I-I'll do my best as the Angel of Magic.

- R-Really?

- Yes, Angel of Magic Han Sora…

'I think she's no longer shy about that title.'

Actually, she was definitely shy about it, but she wasn't as embarrassed as Jo Hye-Jin.

Jo Hye-Jin was still embarrassed, even though the mission was over.

She glanced to the side and spoke to wrap up the situation.

- Mr. Deok-Gu.

-…

- Can you take Miss Jung Ha-Yan outside and see if there are any problems out there?

- Leave it to me.

Park Deok-Gu left with Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora. Then, Jo Hye-Jin spoke to the figure, who had been quietly staring at her.

— It's over. Shit…

-…

— That crazy… Damn it… Is he… Is he… Is that bastard watching right now? Is he

looking down right now? Damn it… Damn it! Lee Ki-Young, that bastard… That… fraud.

- I-I'm sorry.

— I don't want your apology since you're in the same situation as me. Damn it… Damn it… I-I didn't even want the Hero of Shadows title. I just…

-…

'Lift your head, Hye-Jin. Why are you acting like you committed a crime? We did nothing wrong. Am I an embarrassment to you? Really? Was the Hero of Shadows cheesy… '

— What's the point of saying this now? It's ridiculous to even discuss this right now. Shit… Anyway, I don't want anything to do with him anymore… Things didn't go as I had planned, but still… Damn it… Fine, you guys won the war. I'll just…

- I…

— I just wanted to say that I enjoyed our time together. You said your name was Jo Hye-Jin, right? If you don't mind, I'd like to enjoy one last cup of tea. Do you mind waiting for me?

- I-I'm really sorry.

— About what?

- The sub guild master… wants me to tell you… that this isn't over yet. He said that since you're already here…

"Hurry up and tell him to do some work. Ask him if he can help us out with the issues in the Federation," I told her.

— What?

Just then, I saw a masked silver-haired man quietly looking down at them with a smile.

— You guys are just a bunch of insects.

- Did you just call me an insect?

[Plaguelord—a main event of the Mythic-rank dungeon, "The Continent Where the Son of Light Was Sacrificed" will soon begin.]

CHAPTER 836
THE LAST (69)

'You need to take care of this before you leave.'

It wasn't that I didn't trust Hee-Ra noona. I knew she would tear apart anyone, whether they were the Dark Plaguelord or not, but I couldn't lock the two up in a cage when we were at war.

This was going to be…

'Trickier than we think… '

In terms of difficulty, it'd probably be hardcore.

I glanced at the Plaguelord, and it seemed that his stats had increased.

I wasn't really sure about the dungeon's difficulty, but it was clear that they raised the difficulty up a notch, and it was all thanks to the events so far, which were "the Revolution of the Sacred Democratic Country," and "Demon Summoner."

There was a high chance that the difficulty level would vary depending on the clear conditions as well as what kind of battle was going to happen to clear it. This was especially true during the Revolution of the Democratic Country. The Revolutionary Cardinal at the time was an NPC who couldn't express his thoughts properly

A ton of holy power was definitely used to create this dungeon, so it was possible that the NPCs were designed that way to cut down the cost. However, "the Revolution of the Democratic Country" was the main event for the troops and Oscar, so there was no way the Revolutionary Cardinal was the big boss of this main event.

Basically, the Revolutionary Cardinal was nothing more than an NPC who could only move based on his assigned patterns.

Jin Cheong was different, and I had no idea how Ji-Hye noona managed to bring him here. However, he definitely remembered the past and had the ability to express his

thoughts. He still had his vast knowledge of stratagems as well.

Obviously, he didn't have the ability to take the actual lives of people through that game. It was kind of different, but he had to have received some kind of upgrade, just like Jung Jin-Ho and Ito Sota in the game.

"This is simply a story of the past," I mumbled.

It was a story that had already been buried in the cruel passage of time and had long disappeared in history, but stories were normally exaggerated and corrected in many different ways.

The Doom Ki-Young before me had probably received a massive boost.

"The important thing is knowing what's inside there. She could've brought your soul, or you could simply be an idea. I feel kind of bad saying this to you, but do you recognize yourself as the original Jin Cheong?" I asked.

— I do think I'm the original, but I can't exclude the possibility that I might be wrong. Are you wondering what's inside the Plaguelord?

"It honestly doesn't matter, but I am curious. History remembers the Plaguelord as being very cold-hearted, charismatic, and ruthless. He was kind of cool as well… At least, that was the image he was going for," I replied.

- Image?

"Don't worry about it and just deliver my message, Miss Hye-Jin. It was a slip of the tongue," I told her.

— So you're saying his character was created?

"It's highly likely," I answered.

— Then I don't know why you're so worried. A created character is just that—a created character. I don't know exactly how the system works, but if that's nothing more than a clump of crude data, then there's nothing you need to worry about.

"I'm telling you this just in case he's similar to the original. Have you ever thought that there was something strange about your game board earlier? It's too close to the

original to simply call it a game…" I pointed out.

— Crazy bastard.

"Ji-Hye noona made it," I revealed.

— Crazy bitches.

"We created it using the system we made ourselves, and we got pretty great results after investing holy power in it. We succeeded in creating a program that's similar to the original. I honestly didn't expect this, but look at this. Don't you think it's really close to the original?" I asked.

— I'm really at a loss for words… Crazy bastards.

"What's wrong? I know you found this interesting. The Sunset Swordsman was a bit buggy, yes, but except for that, the data is perfect. They can think for themselves and even evolve. You can say that it's a well made artificial intelligence. It was just a coincidence that we reached that kind of result, but calling this a simple junk of data is an insult to Ji-Hye noona, who had created this system," I explained.

Jo Hye-Jin flinched upon hearing my words. She seemed like she had something to say, but she decided to focus on delivering my message for now.

— Then…

"It's possible that the *thing* inside the Plaguelord right now is a character created by that system," I said.

It was highly likely that a few factors had been eliminated, and it might be nothing more than just a chunk of data right now, but Dumb Ki-Young was dangerous in many ways.

After all, he actually managed to beat Seraphim…

'It's pretty obvious.'

It was an understatement to say that the figure who had defeated the Outer God was a mere chunk of data.

'Anyway… '

Either Ji-Hye noona had decided to factory reset Doom Ki-Young, or he had signed a contract with her. It could be both, of course. Ji-Hye noona could have tempted him into signing a contract with her, and she could have gotten rid of unnecessary parts of him to create a chess piece capable of playing the Plaguelord to the T.

I mean, she *did* like Doom Ki-Young.

'This was probably the best way to reduce expenses.'

I would've made the same decision if I were in her shoes. I would've thought about putting more effort into it, as they were named beings. Regardless of how she tempted him, I was sure the chess piece was playing its role to the T. No, there was a high chance that he wasn't just acting. He was probably convinced that he was the Plaguelord, as Ji-Hye noona had got rid of all the minor details about him.

In other words, he had to have forgotten his memories of the dummy world.

'I really want to read that contract.'

Honestly, reading it wasn't worth it, as I assumed it was probably just how Ji-Hye noona would treat the denizens living in the dummy world.

I couldn't guarantee that Ji-Hye noona would keep her promise, and I also couldn't say for sure that Ji-Hye hadn't added her custom mod to Dumb Ki-Young's base form.

I was just assuming things here, but…

'He's dangerous.'

There was a reason he was the BOSS of this dungeon. If a chunk of useful data were shoved into a body that Lucifer and Ji-Hye noona had created based on exaggerated history…

'Dealing with it is going to be a nightmare.'

The chief executives of the Federation became nervous upon hearing the news about how the Sacred Democratic Country and Laios had cleared their main events.

Doom Ki-Young definitely had class as he looked down on the dirty insects with an arrogant look. A large demon army was lined up behind him, and the Plague Dragon was next to him as well. I didn't see Rimoura, Lonovera, or the other four demon warriors, but I saw a few fake demons, including Donovan.

The soldiers quivered as they stared at the distant demon army. The adventurers of the Federation, who could still remember that grueling battle, looked like they were being dragged to the slaughterhouse.

The sight was truly apropos to the name "Plaguelord."

- Miss Cha Hee-Ra.

- Report.

- We cannot fight in these areas. To be exact, these areas have been corrupted by a plague, and we can't find ways to purify them. Even high-ranking adventurers can only hold out for one hour at most.

- So you're saying those fields are useless. Next.

- The ghosts that the Plaguelord had summoned…

- Prepare a separate task force to take care of them. Have you evacuated the denizens of the Federation yet?

- We've made that our top priority. We appointed high-ranking priests and useful alchemists to distinguish between those who are infected and those who aren't infected, but we desperately need manpower.

- What do you think?

- I think it would be better to ask for more manpower from the main base. Of course, it'll make it difficult to maintain the front line, but…

- Do that, then.

- Really?

- The battlefield must be cleared quickly. This is better than doing something

bothersome. Have you received calls from other places?

- No.

- Prepare to enter in four days.

-…

- Four days.

- I-I'll do my best.

The map itself wasn't that great.

Doom Ki-Young seemed to have received a massive upgrade, as he was capable of controlling a myriad of ghosts, unlike me, who could only control a few ghosts at most. He also managed to taint entire regions with a plague. At this point, it would be better to say that he had been reworked.

I could tell that Hee-Ra noona was going to control the troops her own way. It was honestly efficient, and it was like her to do something like that. Her biggest flaw was easily trusting people, but at least she could distinguish between who she could trust and who she couldn't trust.

I had always been thinking that she was closer to the ideal leader than our regressor. If I had to nitpick, though, I'd say that Cha Hee-Ra was being held back by her group.

There was a type of leader who'd find themselves surrounded by people for no apparent reason. Of course, there were many different reasons behind that phenomenon.

Choi Ki-Young was correct at the time. They could be indebted to her, or they could simply be drawn to her name and behavior.

In some ways, it was a blessing, but I was sure the group felt like shackles for her. She couldn't abandon her people, which was why Kim Hyun-Sung's thoughts about her had ended up changing.

Cha Hee-Ra couldn't accept the total destruction of the continent.

“That’s why we need your help,” I said.

— I told you before. I no longer…

“I’m not asking, Commander. This is somewhat of a threat. Since you’ve become a Hero of Shadows, you have to walk the path of the hero,” I told him.

- Is what he said…

—…

“Why are you acting like this? I’m sure you’re thinking this will be fun as well. Think of this as your last game,” I said.

—…

“It’ll be really fun this time,” I commented.

—…

“It’ll be really fun, so let’s enjoy it while we’re doing it. You’re the Hero of Shadows, anyway. I’ll make sure you don’t appear on the big screen again since Hee-Ra noona is the protagonist here,” I reassured him.

— Shit…

He was contemplating. Jin Cheong seemed like he wanted to avoid getting involved with me any further, but he was hesitating, which usually happened whenever one was playing a game.

One could say that they were going to play their last game, but then one would want to play another last game and then another last game.

Jin Cheong wanted to accept his ending humbly, so I was sure he was thinking about playing one last time before leaving. Moreover, his opponent was going to be the Plaguelord, so there was no way he wasn't excited. He was a gamer, after all.

— 28 hours.

“What?”

— Prepare for battle within twenty-eight hours. Jo Hye-Jin, connect to the outpost…

- I'll connect right away.

I saw a surprised Cha Hee-Ra on the Goddess' Mirror.

— It's me. I'll get everything ready in twenty-eight hours.

-…

— Where are the officers with the data that I need right now? Connect me to them. I want you to handle the miscellaneous tasks.

'He's been talking formally all this time, but he's suddenly talking casually. He has let himself go completely.'

Cha Hee-Ra was astonished. It wasn't strange, as she had suddenly received a call from an unknown line, and it turned out to be a call from Hero of Shadows Jin Cheong, who was requesting for more information.

Of course, it wasn't strange that she was surprised.

However, she looked like she didn't mind it at all.

Cha Hee-Ra stared deeply at the screen and spoke softly.

- I'll leave it to you. Connect him to the communication channel.

— How do you want to do this? Is there something you want?

- I'm going to head to the nest.

It seemed that she had already decided on her destination.

'It's Rimoura's nest, except she's not there.'

Back then, Cha Hee-Ra was the commander in charge, so she had no choice but to make her troops retreat from Rimoura's nest.

- But, sir.

Jo Hye-Jin asked.

“Yes?” I answered.

- Are you really okay?

“About what?” I asked.

- No… it’s nothing.

CHAPTER 837
THE LAST (70)

“Is something wrong?” I asked.

- No… I was just wondering if you’re okay.

‘Did I talk too calmly?’

“Are you worried that this is going to be another traumatic experience for me?” I asked.

- Yes, you can say so.

“I’d be lying if I said that this wasn't hard, but… we have to overcome this. My heart breaks to see the thing that I did at the time, but I feel relieved as well, as I actually have the chance to stop it,” I told her.

- I’m glad you think that way, but… still… I think it might be better… if you sit this one out.

“He knows everything. He just can’t remember them. I’m ready to face him,” I said

‘What’s wrong with her all of a sudden?’

Jo Hye-Jin looked really worried. After looking at Jin Cheong, who was busily talking to the Red Mercenary Guild and the officers in order to meet the deadline, she tightened her grip around her spear.

I started thinking that perhaps I was too nonchalant about it. I could still remember how the guild members decided to lock me up after the Plaguelord incident ended, so…

‘I get why she feels that way.’

It seemed that I had gotten too comfortable around her. I talked without thinking too

much about it. If I had spoken in a firm way, my words would have been a bit more convincing.

I was sad, but Light Ki-Young was prepared to face the things he had caused and the sins he had committed. Lauren and Benigoa had already forgiven me, but the guilt inside of me was still there.

I couldn't come out now and say that all of it was made up.

- I honestly can't tell if you're *really* ready to face him.

"What are you talking about?" I asked.

- I'm just worried about you.

"…"

- I hope I'm just worrying for nothing, but… when you descended into my body…

"*Ah*, there's something I'm curious about. What happens to the soul of the owner when I descend into their body?" I asked.

- I didn't really feel much at the time, but I finally understand why a god's descent is called a blessing. I managed to learn a bit more about you. I could feel the place you were at and your condition. If you had truly become a god, then… I was a god's vessel. It made sense, as I obtained a greater understanding of you through that process, but I can't really describe the process itself.

"Well… that's probably because…"

- I don't know what kind of place you're in or where you are exactly, but…

"Probably your soul? Actually, I'm not sure if soul is the right word. You probably felt it because you were separated from your soul. Dialugia is here and I've been getting along with Benigoa as well. Lauren visits sometimes, and I know my condition better than anyone. It's been like that, and it will always be like that. I was honestly kind of confused earlier, but…" I trailed off.

- Excuse me for saying this, but it felt like you were trying to suppress your emotions. I can't really explain it, but… it's like you were trying to stuff it inside a small box…

“Are you certain?” I asked.

- No, but I’m worried that the current situation will make the small box explode. Whenever I think about how much you struggled after that incident…

‘I wasn’t really struggling.’

It was just an act—wait, no, I was actually struggling. How could I not struggle when I was locked up for two weeks? You guys had isolated me from the outside world and had locked the door from the outside…

“As I said, you don’t have to worry,” I said.

- It doesn’t have to be you. Commander Jin Cheong said he’d offer his help, so you should rest.

“No…” I declined.

- I just don’t want you to see it.

“See what?” I asked.

- I don't want you to see yourself being drunk in demonic power and becoming an enemy of mankind after getting brainwashed… I don’t want you to see it.

“I’m already aware of that,” I told her.

- Hearing about it and actually seeing it is different. That man wasn’t you.

‘Doom Ki-Young must’ve been really shocking.’

It seemed that my acting skills were truly outstanding. After all, I made Jo Hye-Jin feel really worried about me.

‘It’s a confusing skill, though.’

Doom Ki-Young looked like the embodiment of evil. His eyes revealed no emotions, and he was looking down on everything as if they were worthless. I felt a shiver down my spine when I saw him being surrounded by demons while wearing a mask.

The fear that the light of humanity had been completely stained by darkness was symbolic. Jo Hye-Jin and many others were trembling in fear.

- *Ahhh! Aaaack!* Please… Please kill me. Please… Please… kill… me…!

- *Ugh*… I-It hurts. It's painful!

- Hang in there just a little more.

- It's really painful! It's…

The word "horrible" wasn't enough to describe how people looked upon getting infected by a plague just because they stepped into the wrong place.

- Plena… it's okay now… so go back. You know you'll be in danger… if you stay here.

It looked like their cells itself were rotting. The plague affecting them seemed to be attacking their cells, which were keeping together their bodies. In other words, the people were collapsing faster into a heap of gore than high-ranking priests casting their healing spells to stabilize the people's bodies.

To make matters worse…

'They can't even take their own lives.'

The plague was designed to cause incessant and prolonged suffering.

Those unfortunate enough to survive the plague looked like they had been exposed to critical levels of radiation. Of course, the high-ranking priests were the reason that they were still alive, as the former were forcefully keeping their bodies together.

The ordeal was really painful. The afflicted's flesh would slough off of them, and then the priests would heal them as soon as possible so that they would not die. Then, the cycle would repeat just like that.

The place where the afflicted were contained did not look gory at all. It actually looked holy, as a large amount of holy power was concentrated in that place. The place was filled with a light so bright that it was shocking that a cacophony of agonized screams could be heard from it.

‘I can see why she’s worried about me.’

The priests who were taking turns giving holy power had been infected as well. I saw one priest nervously looking at the spots that had appeared on their arm. It meant that the plague had broken through their immune system.

They didn’t show their nervousness but simply muttered the name of the god that they were serving before casting their spells once again.

Even worse, the friends and the family members of the infected were kicking up a fuss, wanting to go inside the quarantine zone. The troops were trying their best to keep them out, but I was sure they felt uncomfortable as well seeing the people's devastated faces.

‘This is basically hell. Honestly, it’s amazing that they managed to do all this.’

Many people had been infected, and to put it bluntly, it was no use extending the lives of the infected, as they could not be used in war. Every priest here was going to be helpful in the war against the demon army, but they actually got deployed here instead, so I couldn't help but think that the priests here were being…

‘Wasted… they're being wasted here.’

I was certain that the majority of those standing at the frontlines were questioning their decision. They were following orders, but I was sure many people wanted to say something to the higher-ups. However, their commander was Cha Hee-Ra.

Speaking of Cha Hee-Ra, she immediately left the barracks along with the officers of her guild and made a beeline for the nearby quarantine zone.

‘She’s acting like a politician.’

I was sure she was just trying to see the infected before going into battle. No one was telling her that it was dangerous. They didn’t bother stopping her because she had already decided to go.

- Please… let us go in. Please…

- I just want to see if my younger brother is safe.

- I'd like to see them with my own eyes.

- Don't come any closer. Stay back. Stay back!

- Please!

- Damn it! I told you to stand back!

The crowd rushed toward Cha Hee-Ra as soon as she appeared.

'You're not running for an election.'

The surroundings quickly became noisy.

And that was when Cha Hee-Ra started talking…

- *Ah…*

-…

- Right now, headquarters is doing their best to fix this. I can't say that the infected aren't in serious condition, but we'll do our best so that they will not die in vain. Please wait at the safe zone that the headquarters has provided. Once the infected are identified, the emergency center will tell you their condition… We'll do our best to bring you good news soon.

- T-That's…

- Everyone, we ask for your cooperation. Please cooperate with the soldiers.

- Please cooperate!

- We ask for your cooperation!

- Please!

The soldiers raised their flags as if they had been waiting for this moment, and they moved quickly to manage the crowd.

Cha Hee-Ra walked into the quarantine zone and swept her gaze across the infected.

All she did was comfort them cautiously, but the fact that the best commander was visiting them was enough to give them strength. The plague probably was too weak to harm her, but those who didn't know that would probably feel touched by the fact that she had decided to visit them regardless of the danger.

Actually, quite a few people were touched, and even Cha Hee-Ra's infected guild members were touched as well.

- Hang in there.

- Yes, ma'am…

- We'll resolve this in a few days.

- I'm sorry… for worrying… you…

The officers that came with her joked around to try and comfort her.

- You guys are going to lose muscle if you keep lying down like this.

-…

-…

- Leader… we'll we really… lose muscle… if we get… infected?

- I don't know.

Wait, it was a joke, and he was a mage, so why was he even worried about muscle loss? I couldn't keep up with this strange atmosphere. The huge guys had gathered and would either joke around with the guys lying down on the ground or smack them on the shoulder.

The priests wearing protective gear were trying to stop them, but it was useless. The guys that were screaming in pain had to be really immersed in the atmosphere because they smirked despite getting hit.

I couldn't help but think that some of them had a few screws loose.

'It would have been fun even if we had started here.'

- Let’s go.

- Yes, ma’am.

- Okay.

- Understood.

Horns blared to bless the soldiers heading to the frontline. Some raised their flags, and others started beating drums.

And that was probably when it happened…

In twelve hours, the main unit would head out.

However, the plague scum had already recognized someone beyond the frontline.

— Not bad… for an insect.

His comment made the demon summoner scum of the Republic smile.

— What are you going to do now, you fake scum?

Actually, he wasn’t a demon summoner anymore, but it’s fun to watch villains fighting each other, so I decided to just keep that remark to myself.

CHAPTER 838
THE LAST (71)

The plague scum had terrorized the entire continent. In addition to causing a ton of damage to the Federation to the extent that the Federation could no longer function as a nation, he had also left a massive scar in everyone's heart. The damage that mankind had sustained at the time was irreversible.

The prophesied day was the fight against the Outer God, but the 27th Legion summoning incident was the incident that truly shocked everyone.

The demon summoner scum was on the other side, and there was no need for me to explain his existence. The demon summoner had existed way before the 27th Legion incident, and in fact, he was the one who had destroyed the peace of the continent. He was the demon that had turned his subordinates into undead creatures to attack mankind.

Ito Sota was the first confirmed conspirator of a demon, but the one that made people understand the dangers of the demons was definitely Jin Cheong, the demon-summoning scum of the Republic.

Jin Cheong and Ito Sota were definitely one of the most infamous villains on the continent. Of course, the Outer God and the column of foreign light were excluded.

Jin Cheong and Ito Sota weren't just powerful idiots; they were dirty and downtrodden villains who had thrown their humanity away. It was a rare sight to see those two villains standing in front of each other while engaging in a war of nerves.

'I've actually been dreaming of this sight.'

Personally, I enjoyed stories of heroes starting out from scratch, but I enjoyed these types of stories as well. It would be a battle between two scums who thought that they were better than each other. They'd eventually destroy each other after a fierce fight.

This wasn't important information, but it was really fun to watch bad guys fighting

each other.

The plague scum looked annoyed, but he had a strong sense of self-worth, so I was sure that many thoughts were going through his head. He probably had doubts, as he had noticed that the atmosphere of the frontline had changed abruptly.

There were things that could only be seen from the outside. The soldiers maintaining the frontline were working as usual, but if one were to look at the bigger picture, it wasn't the case at all. It was a spectacular sight to see over a hundred or so lines in a variety of sizes changing their course of action in an instant.

— How ridiculous.

'It's probably not that *ridiculous.'*

The main units of both sides weren't fighting at all.

Jin Cheong's goal was to provide space for the main unit—wait, no, it was to help the main unit reach its goal. When he said he'd prepare within twenty-eight hours, I was sure he meant he'd help Cha Hee-Ra's unit reach the heart of the enemy.

If I were to exaggerate a bit, the series of processes were no different from actions that one could do in a tactical simulator game. Jin Cheong wasn't trying to get resources and create soldiers. He was reorganizing the existing troops, creating new units for certain tasks, and providing them with the best location and the best timing, as well as carrying out a war of attrition and nerves on the frontlines.

Jin Cheong was trying to gain higher ground against the enemy, countering their strategies and exhausting them at the same time.

In that sense, the seeds that the plague scum had sown had to be taken advantage of. I was sure that the plague scum had created the best environment for him. He had turned a difficult terrain into a forbidden zone and effectively stopped the enemy priests and soldiers.

There were too many things involved to say that he had created the infected regions simply because he hated humans, as he had actually succeeded in creating the best battlefield for himself that would prevent the appearance of any variables.

'Actually... I'm certain that he's still trying to perfect this battlefield.'

If Cha Hee-Ra were incompetent, she wouldn’t have made it this far.

I couldn’t say that she was the type to use her brains, but she did possess an immense amount of knowledge. Most importantly, she had many competent people in her group.

Obviously, her intuition was her most valuable skill. Her intuition affected not just her battle but her tactics as well. She knew when to go in and when to retreat, and her body would "feel" everything first before she even realized it.

Cha Hee-Ra's proposal was actually seventy-two hours, and I was sure that decision was born from her intuition, which told her that she had to lead the main unit within seventy-two hours. However, the demon-summoning scum was competent enough to reduce that seventy-two hours to twenty-eight hours.

He had cordoned off the infected regions and provided the most optimal route for Cha Hee-Ra's unit. He had dispatched the remaining troops and pushed back the main units of the line where the plague scum was located.

‘He’s a scum.’

He’d take the line that the plague scum had never considered to be important and transform it into a line that the plague scum would want. If Jin Cheong hadn't been prepared to do all this, I was sure things wouldn’t have gone this smoothly.

- *Aaaaahhhh!!*

- Push them back!

- There aren’t that many enemy troops left! Push them back!

- Come at me, you bastards! You demon bastards!

- *Kyaaaah!*

A battle broke out in one of the lines. It was small, but the battle was so important that it could change the course of this war. It was also the demon-summoning scum's warning to the plague scum.

— Anything artificially made is nothing more than a fake.

'He's having fun.'

Jin Cheong had told me that he did not want to get involved, but his body language was telling me that it wasn't the case. I could see arrogance in his eyes as he sipped his tea quietly.

— It doesn't matter whether you're here or not. An insect's struggle is an admirable sight, but that's all there is to it.

The plague scum lifted his chin.

— Seems like you don't want things to be taken away by a fake.

"How are things down there? Is it going well?" I asked.

— It's always the same story. If there's something you want, you must give something up. I'm simply paying the price for the things that the fake has taken away.

'That's normally how things work when playing hopscotch.'

It was a cost that needed to be paid to maintain the line that the plague scum had on his person. Having many lines meant dividing the limited number of troops among those lines, so it was no different from asking if the plan that the demon-summoning scum was cooking could plug multiple holes in a large dam.

— Are you planning on abandoning your troops?

— I'm not abandoning them, nor am I sacrificing them. I'm simply keeping them grouped up along with the troops that you have.

— I'll kill them all.

— Do you really think that a fake can kill them?

— I'll send Donovan.

— If you want to protect it, the only thing you can do is dispatch a named being, but how will you protect the other lines? Show me how you can do it, you fake.

— The remaining lines are worthless, so I just need to make them useless for you.

It’s amusing seeing you trying to imitate me, but how are you going to handle power that you can’t handle? I pity your incompetence, you insect. I'm sure your tiny insect brain thinks that it's unfair, but this is what you call "strategy."

— A commander and the named beings are bound to have an impact on the battlefield. It looks amazing, but all you’re doing is spreading a plague or creating infected regions. Your range is limited, and there must be conditions before you can use your powers.

— You lowly human.

— You're boring, but you’re better than the original, you fake.

‘This is such a mess.’

They were having a war of nerves.

‘They sure are fighting in such an intense manner. I guess it's because they’re villains? Anyway, they really aren’t trying to compromise.’

Sometimes, it was necessary to compromise and give up a few things to win a war, but I could see the two clinging on to the things that they were supposed to give up until the end before finally letting go.

If they could slap the other person’s right cheek hard in exchange for getting their left cheek hit, it wouldn’t be good to show their left cheek.

‘The plague scum is definitely different from me.’

I was sure that Lee Ji-Hye was behind it. I couldn’t really explain the difference, but he seemed bolder and more decisive than me. If I was the type to avoid fights and go around in circles, then he was the type who'd never be afraid of fights.

I'd only roll the dice when the odds were high, but he wouldn't hesitate to roll the dice even when the odds were low. He was confident in himself rather than in the odds of winning. He was looking down on lowly humans as well, which truly fit his character as the plague scum.

It wasn’t the best example, and I was probably overinterpreting it, but it felt like Ji-Hye noona was telling me that I could be a bit more simple-minded and

straightforward.

'She did *like Doom Ki-Young a lot.'*

The two villains continued their vicious war of nerves. They were mumbling to themselves as if they were staring at each other.

— It's time to squash the insects. This is the result of your arrogance, lowly human.

— Does this idiot know that he's surrounded?

— I'll squash you with them.

— Does that mean that he knew? How Interesting.

Jin Cheong looked cool, but the fact that he was talking to himself made him appear cringey. I wasn't trying to throw shade here, but his gaze reminded me of a psychopath.

Actually, the two of them looked like psychopaths.

—…

"What's wrong, Commander?" I asked.

— What's going on? I… Hey, are you listening? Commander of the 13th Federal Regiment. I don't remember giving you orders to leave that area. Return at once.

- I'm Colonel Smith, the Commander of the 13th Regiment. This regiment received an order 19 minutes and 28 seconds ago through the communication channel to head to the Holshua Valley. Please check again to see if there are any problems.

"*Ah*, just let them go. We have other uses for those troops, so they'll be heading to Holshua Valley," I informed him.

— What?

"Weren't you planning on waging war to occupy Holshua Valley? If that was your plan, you should just do it. Don't you agree?" I asked.

—…

"…"

— What?

"…"

—…

"What?" I asked.

— Y-You idiot! Damn it!

"Why are you cursing all of a sudden? I'm just offering my help because it seemed like you missed it," I told him.

— You fool! Damn it! You ruined it all. I told you not to get involved!

"What's wrong with you? You said you were going to occupy Holshua Valley! You think that'll work with the existing troops?" I questioned.

— I know we're lacking troops. If we move the troops at the 13th line, there's no reason to occupy it. If an occupation is impossible…

"It's a shame that the battle will end before we can dispatch additional troops. Colonel Smith looks like someone who's good at occupying areas. You should take a look at his records and stats. It'll be beneficial for you as well if you occupy this area," I suggested.

— You'll just be wasting troops. Damn it… damn it! Lee Ki-Young, you useless fool! Forget it. I'm not even going to bother explaining it to you. I already expected you to get in the way of my plan using those foolish plans of yours. I guess it doesn't matter even if we end up losing those troops, but let me say this one more time: don't you dare get involved again. Don't ruin my plan with your useless bluffing.

'This bastard. You said you didn't want to get involved, damn it. You said you were satisfied… '

Perhaps it was because he was a villain, but he had a bad personality.

Since he had disconnected from the communication channel with Jo Hye-Jin, it seemed that I had really ruined his plan. However, I had complete trust in Colonel Smith. I had trust in the colonel with a cool-looking mustache. He was the jackpot.

- This is Colonel Smith, the Commander of the 13th Federation Regiment. I would like to report that we've occupied the frontline at Holshua Valley. Following the order from earlier, we're planning on joining the troops to support the 14th line. I'll send the damage report while we're moving… Please let me know if there are any issues with the order.

—…

"…"

— N-No issues. Proceed with the plan.

"…"

— Not bad.

"What…"

— Lee Ki-Young…

"What did you say?" I asked.

— I-I… apologize.

"I can't hear you because I'm just a scummy fool. What did you say?" I repeated.

— It was a slip of the tongue.

"What?" I questioned.

Jin Cheong clenched his fists.

CHAPTER 839
THE LAST (72)

“You only see what you know,” I told him.

—…

“It’s not a bad thing to look at the overall situation and plan things out for the bigger picture. I like looking at the bigger picture as well. That’s the basics, and it’s a fact everyone knows. I also like increasing our profits through the snowball method. However, it’s really important to identify the key points of the war and focus on adjusting them to your advantage,” I advised.

—…

“Think about why you’re there, Commander. You don’t have to feel embarrassed about it. Ignorance isn't a sin, but it’s not good to treat people like idiots just because a method you don’t understand is being used. How did I know? Do you understand why I made that decision?” I asked.

‘Look at him staying quiet. 'Cat got your tongue?'

Jin Cheong looked like he was trying to ignore me, but he was actually curious. He seemed surprised that the stupid plan he thought was sabotaging his plan had somehow brought the best results so far.

He probably thought that it was impossible to occupy the Holshua Valley, as it was nothing more than an illusion. The battle he had prepared to attract the attention of the enemy troops was actually going to be used in the war of attrition, and it was all because he thought it was going to be impossible to occupy Holshua Valley.

However, he had actually received a report about how it had been occupied successfully.

Jin Cheong acted like he was not interested at all, but I was sure he wanted to rewind time and observe the battlefield from above. He’d probably return to the battle at

Holshu Valley after the other battlefields had been handled.

Unfortunately, his pride did not let him ask any questions, and I actually found him quite pitiful because of that.

— I said it was a slip of the tongue.

However, Jin Cheong had to be really curious because he was talking about it in an indirect manner.

— It's interesting.

"Oh yeah?" I asked.

— How did you win that fight? No, how did you know—I'm not really interested, but if you want to talk about it, I'll listen.

"You have to figure that out on your own," I told him.

— Bastard.

"If you don't know, you can just learn as you go. Your nasty temper of wanting to find out other people's tricks without any effort is disgusting," I commented.

—…

"Who's the fool now?" I asked jokingly.

— Don't talk to me. I'm busy right now, Lee Ki-Young.

"Who's the fool?" I asked.

— Bastard.

'Just be honest… '

Honestly, all I did was put Mind's Eye to good use, but my mood improved upon seeing him getting annoyed. Unlike me, he had no way of checking the battlefield, so I was sure that he was dying to know what had happened.

He was trying to suppress his desire to ask Colonel Smith exactly what kind of order he had received. Unfortunately for him, I did not provide Colonel Smith with a detailed strategy. I *did* tell Colonel Smith about the unit designations and key points to prioritize, but it was a very rudimentary strategy. Holshua Valley's successful capture was all thanks to Colonel Smith's competency.

'Where have you been hiding all this time?'

Colonel Smith looked kind of nervous. His mustache, which covered half of his face, was neatly groomed, and I could see his deep eyes on his sharp face.

'The protagonist is hiding his powers.'

It wasn't common, but it happened from time to time. Of course, it was especially not as common in situations like this. It wasn't bad to be a commander of the Federation that was in the middle of recovering. It wasn't a bad position to be in, and he could make an impact as a commander. However, the position was useless to him, considering his abilities.

I wasn't sure whether he wanted to live a peaceful life or he did not want to get involved in troublesome situations, but it was an undeniable fact that he didn't want people to know about his abilities.

His position as a regiment commander would not bring him any fame or glory, and it was obvious that he only decided to take on this job because he wanted to take care of his people. He was really unlucky, and I was sure he thought the same thing.

When I told him to take his troops to Holshua Valley, he probably assumed that I was telling him to get rid of as many troops as possible there and to stay alive. In other words, he had no choice but to occupy Holshua Valley if he wanted to survive with his troops.

Unfortunately, he had to use his true power to protect the things he wanted to protect.

- Colonel Smith, are you okay?

- No use crying over spilled milk.

'I like that attitude.'

His estimated combat power is probably above the previous Eight Seats, and he had a Unique Legendary-rank job called Magic Bullet Marksman. He was basically capable of shooting magic bullets using his fingers. His Strength was pretty high, so he could make an impact even in mid to close-range fights.

He had swift reload speed as well, allowing him to shoot a volley of devastating bullets. He was also skilled as a commander, and he had a keen eye for analyzing the battlefield. How could I *not* use a guy like him? I had found him by accident, and I had to make use of his abilities.

“Hye-Jin, connect me to Colonel Smith. I want to talk to him,” I ordered.

- Yes, sir.

“*Ah*, tell the Commander that I’m going to take some of the key areas. The Holshua Valley, Lycanria Basin, and…” I trailed off.

- I’ll let him know.

“I’m sure nothing will happen. Show me the Goddess’ Mirror. Let’s get this started,” I instructed.

- Don’t overdo it.

“I won’t.”

Colonel Smith's face became serious. Obviously, Jo Hye-Jin was calling him. The next moment, he shut his eyes tight upon realizing that I had to have seen through his true power.

"It's over," Colonel Smith mumbled. He definitely felt sick to his stomach just thinking about what he had done, and it was proven by how he had unconsciously dropped his water canteen.

‘This is what war is all about. A new hero usually appears in the midst of war.’

As expected, Jin Cheong didn’t say anything, but he quietly took out dozens of hand mirrors and pretended like he was watching someone else rather than Jo Hye-Jin. Colonel Smith's face was in the mirror, and he soon started talking.

- I have reached the front.

"*Ah*, Colonel Smith," I greeted.

- Yes?

"From now on, you no longer need to command the 13th Federation Regiment," I told him.

-…

I took a sip of my coffee before explaining things to him.

"I plan on using you myself, so keep that in mind. I want you to move by yourself to the points I had marked on the map. I'll take care of the rest," I instructed him.

- Are you ordering me to die right now? I ask that you reconsider.

'Why would I kill you? You're so competent, so why would I do that?'

"You won't die. It's a chance for you to become the hero of the continent. If I tell you to move, you move. If you disobey my orders…" I trailed off.

- I understand.

Colonel Smith immediately started moving. He was fast, but his Attack Speed and Attack Range turned out to be not that great. He dished out dozens of magic bullets, and it was amazing to see hundreds of magic bullets making a beeline for the demon army.

I thought we had a pretty good synergy.

His level was low, but he was competent enough to handle an entire frontline by himself.

After barely managing to dodge a large axe flying toward him, he shot the axe-wielding demon in the head. After blocking the oncoming flying sword, he shot the sword-wielding demon in the eye.

Of course, he was receiving a ton of support from allied forces as well.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Beautiful but unnecessary…

His mana pool was tiny, which was his greatest weakness.

His unique ability allowed him to reload swiftly, but his mana pool was so small that he had no choice but to overuse his ability. The fact that there was a delay seemed like a flaw, but there were many ways to make up for his flaws.

He had an eye for analyzing the battlefield, so there was no need for me to explain anything to him. Colonel Smith was displaying the true power of a named being. I was sure that he was feeling cathartic as well. He still looked nervous, but the notion of becoming one with the battlefield was something that only swordsmen usually wanted to do.

'Does he feel more exhausted the more he uses his unique ability?'

He would have been more useful if he were younger.

Jin Cheong was staring at Jo Hye-Jin, who was watching everything.

He was probably curious about what was happening right now, but he had experienced this before. Of course, it couldn't be compared to what had happened to him at the time, but he *did* experience this before.

I was worried that the painful memory might come back, but I wasn't really worried about his mental health.

'I was more worried about the mental health of our plague scum.'

"He probably got backstabbed pretty hard. Don't you agree?" I asked.

— You used the same method… Aren't you tired of it?

"You know how effective it is. This is why two versus one is great. I can effectively backstab at the right time. Do you see the demon army crumbling? I didn't expect this to happen," I said.

Jin Cheong had been wary of the plague scum all this while, but the plague scum had

to have been caught off guard by the brand-new battlefield right in the middle of Holshua Valley.

Wait, I was convinced that he might be angry.

The fact that the line there was helplessly crumbling down beneath the assault of mere insects was probably making him feel furious. He wanted to control them himself, but that was impossible, as the demon-summoning scum was watching his every move.

While the two were duking it out, I was getting the juicy profits from the sidelines.

'Don't underestimate human power, you dirty plague scum. This is the power of justice.'

"Colonel Smith, move as if your life depends on it. The faster you move, you'll save more of your subordinates," I ordered him.

-…

'This is the power of light, plague scum.'

"You're not complying with the policy of the Continental Protection Management Committee. I'm sure you're supposed to report your true strength. Why have you been hiding your powers?" I asked.

- I'm sorry, but…

"Don't say anything right now. Following my orders is the only way you'll survive and leave your name on the continent as a war hero. I'll help you. At the very least, I'll do what I can to ensure that your beloved regiment is safe," I reassured him.

'Are you watching? The light that fights for his comrades never loses to darkness.'

As expected, the plague scum frowned, and that was about it, but his eyes were shaking. His figure had stiffened as well, which told me the level of his fury.

He seemed to be thinking that he was too weak, as mere insects were managing to beat him up. I was waiting for him to jump around and shout in fury, but he definitely thought that reacting that way would make him look undignified, as he had decided to suppress his anger.

'I would've shouted if I were you.'

I would have at least thrown something to the ground.

After all, I had managed to ruin his plans, not once, but twice. To make matters worse, the plans I had ruined were plans that he thought were going swimmingly. If he were created based on me, then I was sure he was angry at the fact that his plan wasn't going as planned. What would happen next was pretty obvious.

— I'll kill you. I'll let you experience the most painful hell no matter what.

'One of them is already in hell.'

— You thought I would just stand idly by?

'What?'

— This is my gift, you lowly humans. Curse your helplessness and die.

The plague scum leaned back into his chair and snapped his finger. Moments later, a violent tremor ran across Laios.

Park Deok-Gu started calling out for me, and I immediately figured out what was going on. I had no idea how this happened, and I also had no idea how that bastard managed to pull this off, but the clump of mana floating above Laios right now was…

"Falling…" I muttered.

—…

"You damned demon-summoning bastard! You traitor!" I shouted.

— It's not me, damn it…

"How dare you return the favor with vengeance?!" I yelled.

— I told you it's not me… I… Damn it… What the hell…

"Look at him acting, Hye-Jin. Hurry up and kill this traitor!" I ordered.

— Lee Ki-Young! You crazy bastard! I already told you that I didn't do it!

"Call Jung Ha-Yan! Ha-Yan! Call our Ha-Yan! Call my love, Ha-Yan!" I shouted.

CHAPTER 840
THE LAST (73)

“Hurry and bring me Ha-Yan!” I shouted.

- Sub Guild Master!

“…”

“We can stop it, right?” I asked.

We could definitely stop it.

“You traitor! How dare you backstab me after I gave you the Hero of Shadows title?!” I shouted.

— I told you I didn’t do it! Damn it! And the Hero of Shadows…

“Then what is it? What the hell is going on, Commander?” I questioned.

— I’ll go and find out right now.

“You said it wouldn’t fall, but that was all bullshit…” I said.

— I can stop it.

“…”

I agree.

“But how can you guarantee that? That thing will disappear once you die. That’s how the system was built in the first place. I don’t want to say this, but you should just sacrifice yourself.

"You’re… the Hero of Shadows anyway… and it’s not like you’re actually alive. I also don’t want to worry about useless things… let’s end it here,” I suggested.

— The fact that it's out of control has broken the rules of the dungeon. There's also no guarantee that the clump of mana will disappear if I disappear. In addition, you're going to regret it if I end up dying here. Think this through. It's also normal for the command center to suffer.

“It’s normal only during *normal* situations, don’t you agree? You created the mana floating up there. If the demon-summoning bastard isn't the traitor, then the plague scum had hacked the system up there. Do you think that makes sense, you bastard?” I asked.

— He probably didn’t hack the dungeon’s system. If I had to add to that, I’d say he got permission. The Continent Where the Son of Light Was Sacrificed isn’t an ordinary dungeon in the first place. You managed to overcome the Demon Summoner, which was a main event, and you’re even using me right now. Upon gaining something, it’s only natural to suffer losses in return. The fake bastard simply used one of the events to his advantage.

“Does that mean that what we know so far hasn't changed?” I said.

— Yes, and it also means that my event and role have ended. I’m not sure if I should thank you for it, but that’s a possibility.

Jin Cheong placed his hand on Jo Hye-Jin’s shoulder.

“Take your hand off her, you bastard,” I told him.

— I was simply testing something. We couldn't even touch each other during the event, but we can do it now, so there's a chance that we can get out of here. Of course, I do not really think that it's necessary.

“…”

— I believe that crazy woman can stop that mana, but of course… it won’t fall straight down.

Jin Cheong was right. The clump of mana floating above Laios right now was mana that was no longer under the dungeon’s control. If Jung Ha-Yan could stop it, then the plague scum wouldn’t just let it fall straight down.

As expected, ghosts shrouded the falling clump of mana, and there were so many of

them that the clump of mana changed colors. It became a dull color that instilled fear in just about anyone in just a single glace.

Jung Ha-Yan stared indifferently at it and started channeling.

Han Sora's expression was grim, and her expression made me realize just how dangerous the current situation was. The clump of mana had grown to the extent that it would damage both the Sacred Democratic Country and the Republic if it landed.

Finally…

Kabooooooooooooooom!!!

The mana crashed against the transparent barrier above Laios.

-…

Jung Ha-Yan stretched her arms out and cast her spell.

Park Deok-Gu glanced with admiration at Jung Ha-Yan before jumping out and lifting his shield. He saw one of the ghosts charging toward Jung Ha-Yan, and Park Deok-Gu protected her in the same manner as he had done during the Laios Incident long ago.

Han Sora was doing the same thing. She was casting spells and fighting the ghosts while occasionally glancing at Jung Ha-Yan.

'Shit.'

The ghosts managed to go through Jung Ha-Yan's barrier. Jung Ha-Yan was surprised, and she hurriedly cast a spell. However, I saw Jung Ha-Yan frown when a mysterious smoke shrouded her barrier.

Boooooooooooooooooom!

- AAAAHHH!

Cracking noises echoed up above. I thought Jung Ha-Yan would have no issues blocking the clump of mana, but I could read her expression.

‘She’s getting stressed because things aren't working out the way she wanted them to work.’

To make things worse, cracks appeared all over the magic barrier. Actually, they weren’t cracks. It was more like the barrier was falling apart in multiple places at the same time.

The clump of mana seemed to be influencing the rotting corpses down below because they were standing up. The sight made me frown.

‘Summoning magic.’

Jung Ha-Yan cast her spell once again. She couldn’t cancel the summoning ritual itself with a magic barrier, so she was trying to find other ways. Meanwhile, the summoned undead stood up and attacked the party.

The sight was so similar to the sight back then, and the only big difference was that I wasn't there.

‘And the pig is getting pushed back because they’re coming in waves… ’

Obviously, the undead weren't strong enough to break through the pig’s defense, but one hand couldn't stop ten hands. Park Deok-Gu was protecting Jung Ha-Yan while fending off the creatures clinging to him, but…

‘No, he’ll be fine.’

The real danger wasn’t the undead creatures but the clump of mana falling toward them. The undead creatures were interrupting Ha-Yan’s channeling, and that was their only person; they weren't actually there to harm her.

- Noonim! Noonim! Sora, you come here too!

Park Deok-Gu pulled Han Sora’s arm and hugged her along with Jung Ha-Yan tightly.

He couldn’t block all of them, so he decided to just use his body to protect the two. It was admirable seeing him use his large frame to block the undead creatures, but that wasn’t the right answer, as there was no way he could withstand the attacks of so many undead creatures.

- I'll bear with it! I'll do it!

- *Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!!*

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan! Miss Jung Ha-Yan!!!

- Don't worry. I promised hyung-nim I would protect you until he comes, and I always keep my promise!

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan! Are you okay? Miss Jung Ha-Yan!

- Hey, I'm going to protect you as well, Sora.

- *Kyaaaaaaaaaaah!*

- *Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!*

- Just keep channeling your spell! I'll hold them off, so don't be scared!

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan!

I noticed Han Sora closing her eyes while holding Jung Ha-Yan's hand tightly, but Jung Ha-Yan wasn't looking at her. She was looking up at the sky and was focused on channeling her spell.

I could tell her concentration was reaching its limit while she was trying to respond to the clump of mana's ever-changing properties. She could also be thinking that it was just a bluff.

First of all, the plague scum used the clump of mana above Laois before proceeding to use a mysterious smoke to shroud Jung Ha-Yan's barrier. Then, he cast summoning magic to summon undead creatures.

The plague scum's attacks seemed random, and since Jung Ha-Yan had no idea what was going to happen next, she couldn't afford to put her guard down.

The undead creatures climbed up Park Deok-Gu's large frame while shrieking. Han Sora cast spells here and there, and I noticed some of them getting sent flying away, but there were so many of them that Han Sora's attacks weren't very effective.

I was certain that they would be able to hold them off, but I was so anxious that I unconsciously started tapping on my thigh.

It was getting harder and harder to even see Park Deok-Gu despite his large frame, as too many undead creatures had climbed up his back.

Jung Ha-Yan's expression was slowly becoming ugly as well.

The idea of suppressing the enemy with pure mass was primitive but effective.

'Shit.'

- I can do better. *Kgh…*

- *Yahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!*

- I can do better! I can do better!

'This pig's Strength stat isn't even that high.'

— Looks like there's a useful insect among them.

'Meanwhile, this bastard is being annoying.'

But…

"He has invested a lot," I commented.

— Obviously.

"I'm sure he invested a lot," I added.

— That's probably why that fake bastard is annoyed with my existence.

We were annoying him so much that he decided to attack our command center directly.

I had deduced his motives long ago, and it was definitely because he did not want to lose control of himself as well as expand the battlefield beyond the current lines.

I didn’t have to be informed to know how much he had invested in this attack. He had invested enough to make Jung Ha-Yan nervous, and he had even dragged in the ghosts that were at the front…

— He probably doesn’t want to be swayed any longer. He's just a fake bastard, but he's made with you in mind, after all. Of course, I find it funny how he looks bulkier than you.

“He doesn't just look bulkier. He's actually—”

— But he has revealed his weakness.

‘Did this bastard really not betray me?’

Just then, I saw a few undead creatures rushing toward Jin Cheong and Jo Hye-Jin while shrieking.

Jo Hye-Jin raised her spear and killed a few of them. The part that kind of surprised me was that the demon-summoning scum didn’t seem surprised. Jin Cheong took a step backward and struck their chests using his palm. There was a loud boom, and I saw his palm print on the chest of the undead creatures.

The undead creatures were blasted away, shattering upon impact with a distant wall.

‘Now that I think about it, his Strength was pretty high as well.’

He possessed abilities that were equal to someone with a close-range job.

Jo Hye-Jin was taking care of most of them, but the skills he was showing here and there were pretty high level. It seemed that he enjoyed countering because he'd always make the undead attack him first before using the back of his hand to counterattack.

It was great, but I found it nauseating how he was trying to maintain a certain pose like he was trying to maintain his dignity.

‘He really fights like the real version of him. He fights in a mean and dirty way.

- Not bad.

— It's not that great to hear compliments like that. This is just the basics… I think you're more amazing. I've met a lot of people claiming that they're martial artists, but none of them were as good as you when it comes to dignity and skills.

"Tell that bastard to shut up," I instructed her.

-…

— By the way, are you okay?

"About what?" I asked.

— I'm talking about where that crazy mage is at. I remember you telling me they were precious to you… You don't seem all that worried.

Well, it wasn't that I wasn't worried. The pig's legs were trembling, and Han Sora's mana was about to run out. Mana was flowing out of Jung Ha-Yan's lips and eyes, which told me that she had already entered her own world.

The situation would be better if I were there, so yes, I was worried. The scene was the same as that scene long ago, but I wasn't there, so how could I not worry? However, I was kind of relieved because there were some positive changes.

- You dirty undead bastards!

- How dare you lay your filthy hands on her! You ugly creatures of the demon!

A defeaning boom echoed, and I saw a group of undead creatures exploding into a gory mist.

'Those gramps are pretty strong.'

Colorful magic circles manifested all over Jung Ha-Yan's barrier.

The Magic Tower gramps roared in unison as their long beard billowed out in the wind.

- Protect Miss Jung Ha-Yan!

I could see that some of them had their eyes… rolled back.

CHAPTER 841
THE LAST (74)

'The mana… '

I[1] saw a field of colorful magic circles.

'Miss Jung Ha-Yan.'

"Miss Jung Ha-Yan… do you see it?" I asked.

"…"

"Are you watching?" I asked.

"…"

The sight was so beautiful that I couldn't describe it, and it made me cry. Perhaps it was because I was feeling a bit emotional today. Yeah, I was definitely feeling a bit emotional today. I had almost exhausted my mana, so I was at my limits physically. To make matters worse, we were in a really extreme situation.

I could be having useless thoughts, as I was too exhausted.

"Are you okay? Sora… noonim… are you both okay?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Yes, I'm… fine," I answered.

"…"

"And you, noonim…" Park Deok-Gu said.

"…"

"Is she still…"

“Yes,” I answered.

I had long become extremely familiar with Miss Jung Ha-Yan. There was a time when I thought that attempting to understand this woman was a crazy thing to do, but I no longer thought so after spending quite a bit of time with her.

Of course, it was also possible that she had influenced me without me realizing it.

I hated thinking about the moment we first met, but I could understand her pain. I wasn’t skilled at reading other people’s minds, and it wasn't like I knew everything about her. In addition, my thoughts were based on the things I had seen or heard. I wasn’t certain about it, but I pitied Miss Jung Ha-Yan a lot.

‘I’m crazy… for having thoughts like these. This might be Stockholm Syndrome. I have to get a grip… I really have to… '

Getting abandoned by one's family was rare, and I couldn’t imagine being betrayed by the people whom I trusted the most. Jung Ha-Yan was still traumatized by that experience, and it had a direct influence on her personality.

Obviously, she had trust issues as well.

Miss Jung Ha-Yan was extremely reluctant to connect with others. She disliked having to interact with people, and when she was forced to do so, she was always unable to get her point across properly.

At a glance, it would seem like she just didn't get along with others, but if one were to look closely at it, one could tell that she simply did not want to interact with others. I was sure others would think that perhaps Jung Ha-Yan wasn't at fault, but it wasn't the case at all, as Jung Ha-Yan had built a wall that prevented anyone from getting close to her except for a few select people.

‘She often gets lonely… ’

It’d be strange to think that she enjoyed being alone, but perhaps there was a good reason she decided to build a wall. However, she was afraid to part ways with those who had crossed her wall.

I knew that I couldn't think this way, but she was like a puppy with separation anxiety disorder. She was definitely not normal when she couldn’t be with those who

had crossed her wall. She'd become worried and antsy; she'd never stop thinking negatively.

Miss Jung Ha-Yan was always afraid that the people who had crossed her wall would abandon her one day, just like what her family had done.

Those select few were basically the parts that allowed her to operate, and it would be problematic if they went missing, as she wouldn't be able to function properly. She'd neglect her basic needs like eating and sleeping, and she'd also neglect what was necessary for a human being to survive.

I had never brought this up to her directly, but this was…

'A mental illness.'

I glanced to the side and saw Miss Jung Ha-Yan looking up at the sky while holding up her staff. Mana constantly flowed out of her eyes and mouth, and she did not stop chanting her spells. I also heard shouts everywhere.

Kabooooooooooooooom!

With a loud noise, the undead creatures flew in every direction. The undead creatures that were trying to get to Miss Jung Ha-Yan somehow were blocked by a transparent wall and couldn't advance any further.

"Protect Miss Jung Ha-Yan!"

"Miss Jung Ha-Yan! Are you okay?"

"I'll support. Cast your spells, everyone. Keep casting even if your mana runs out."

"Stop those dirty undead bastards from running wild! You sinners of God and man! You dirty fools! How dare you try to harm Miss Jung Ha-Yan?!"

"Miss Jung Ha-Yan! Miss Jung Ha-Yan!"

How could I calm down when the guild members who had spent time with her at the Magic Tower, the elderly who always treated her like their own granddaughter, the scholars who respected her, and even the apprentices had raised their voices for her?

It wasn't simply because they admired her power or were looking up to her. They knew Miss Jung Ha-Yan very well, and they were drawn to her personality. They supported her out of the goodness of their hearts.

"Miss Jung Ha-Yan, how about meeting other people?" I asked.

'…'

"I received a call from the Magic Tower. Some people wanted to eat with you," I informed her.

"I-I don't want to. I just want to eat with you, Sora," Jung Ha-Yan replied.

"But…" I said.

"W-W-What? Y-Y-You want me to get out?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"No, that's not what I meant. I just…"

"I-I asked if you want me to get out… I-I-I…" Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

"That's not… what I meant," I mumbled.

"I-I don't… really want to see them. They have… nothing to do with me… anyway," Jung Ha-Yan said.

A few such scenes popped into my head.

"Heuk… kgh…"

I recalled how she cried alone in a dark room.

"I-I'm going to become the God of Magic."

And how she comforted herself by making somewhat absurd comments…

"I-I'm going to become a god, and you'll become an angel of magic, S-Sora," she stuttered.

"…"

"W-W-We'll be able to see oppa. If he can't come down here, then I'll go up there, and i-it's not that difficult anyway. Oppa said that if I have a goal, I can achieve it by focusing on it. It'll help me forget my hardships… O-Oppa… yeah… o-oppa…" Jung Ha-Yan said.

"I-I'm sure you can do it, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. Don't cry. Take your time making your plan. You stopped mid-way last time. If you make it a little more specific this time…" I suggested.

Now that I thought about it, I hadn't been able to see her smile these days, and the scenes that kept popping into my head were scenes of her either crying or covering herself with a blanket. She would sometimes laugh but would immediately become sad as if she had never laughed in the first place.

I thought meeting others would impact her positively, but I wasn't even sure whether that was really the right thing to do or not, as I couldn't deduce whether people were approaching her with pure intentions or not.

If I were to convince her, I would be able to set up a meeting with people, but…

"Excuse me, but I have a favor to ask Miss Jung Ha-Yan…" they said.

"We refuse. If you want to talk about something official, please ask through the guild. Let's go, Miss Jung Ha-Yan," I told them.

"A-Ah… Uh, are you okay?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"Yes, I'm fine. Looks like I was wrong about them. Ptooey. Disgusting human," I commented.

"D-Do you want me to kill them?" Jung Ha-Yan offered.

Most of them didn't have great results.

"I would like to make an offer to join our guild…"

"Shut up, you bastard. Don't even think about contacting us in the future," I warned.

"…"

"I'm researching a new spell. Sora unni, I'm really sorry to ask, but if you can help me a

little…"

"Let's not see each other again," I told her.

There were many people who made ridiculous suggestions, coveting Jung Ha-Yan's knowledge. There were even some who outright stole Jung Ha-Yan's works. She was the mage whom I hired when I was busy with my studies, and she was tasked with filling my empty spot when I was busy with something else.

I recalled how Miss Jung Ha-Yan wasn't even disappointed when that mage disappeared a few days later. Jung Ha-Yan didn't even mention why the girl never showed up again, and she didn't even ask any questions about her.

Jung Ha-Yan didn't get hurt because she didn't really think that much about her in the first place.

"Miss Jung Ha-Yan… do you…"

"I-I don't know. I-I really don't know anything," Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

"…"

Jung Ha-Yan didn't even believe in her own words herself. She believed that there wasn't anyone who could give her strength or provide her with a healthy relationship, which was why she was stuck all this while. It was also the reason she started crying.

"There are so many…" I said.

"What do you mean?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"There are so many people who love Miss Jung Ha-Yan," I replied.

"Hey, who would hate noonim?" Park Deok-Gu questioned.

"There are so many people who are willing to lend you their strength without expecting anything back, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. You're probably thinking that you're alone and that no one likes you, but that's not true. Look at them. You definitely are not alone, so don't think that way," I said.

“Of course, she’s not alone at all. There are so many people who trust and follow her. I don’t know what kind of nonsense you’re talking about right now, but everyone in the Blue Guild trusts her. Hye-Jin noonim, Alps, the new guild member, and Hee-Young noonim, whom I haven’t seen in a while, even ask about her sometimes,” Park Deok-Gu said.

“Are you watching, Miss Jung Ha-Yan?” I asked.

“Hyun-Sung bro, hyung-nim, Ki-Mo bro, Ye-Ri, Miss Kim Mi-Young, Ah-Young, Chang-Ryeol… a-and everyone on the continent loves her. I’m sure everyone is rooting for her,” Park Deok-Gu stuttered.

“Yes, everyone is rooting for her. The people from the Magic Tower, the Sacred Democratic Country, Lindel, the people I sometimes run into while going on a walk, and the people I've met at cafes and restaurants all like and think about her,” I added.

Jung Ha-Yan's biggest supporter wasn’t here, which was why I wanted her to witness this scene. I was sure everyone was praying for her. There were mages standing bravely before the falling clump of mana, and they created thousands—no, tens and thousands of magic circles. The mages gave their mana to Jung Ha-Yan, even though their mana was like their lifeline.

There were also people praying fervently while looking at her.

“I’m sure… the denizens of Laios feel the same way. She saved them twice already,” Park Deok-Gu said.

“You’re right,” I said.

“Hang in there, Miss Jung Ha-Yan!”

“You can do it, Archmage!”

“Listen, Army of Laios! The undead creatures must not reach the archmage no matter what. Protect her even if it means putting your life on the line! For the savior of the neutral country! For Laios! Let’s show that we’re willing to risk our lives!”

“Let’s protect her!”

For some reason, I couldn’t stop crying.

“Miss Jung Ha-Yan… do you see this?” I mumbled.

And that was when large wings burst out of Miss Jung Ha-Yan’s back.

It was a large pair of wings that looked as if they were made out of pure mana—consolidated mana—no, mana crystal… no, it was definitely made out of pure mana.

When Jung Ha-Yan's wings filled with an enormous amount of mana spread out, it felt like a strong wind was blowing across Laios.

Perhaps it was because of her mana, but she started floating in mid-air, and she looked really amazing and majestic.

Miss Jung Ha-Yan really looked like an angel when her four pairs of wings surrounded her, and the mana that was flowing out of her mouth and eyes had disappeared at some point. Miss Jung Ha-Yan was no longer screaming; she looked calm and more mature.

She spread her wings wide, and an array of radiant magical light flew to the sky.

Kabooooooooom!

A deafening noise echoed, and a large, brand-new barrier surrounded Laios.

“Miss… Jung Ha-Yan? You're seeing this, right?” I asked.

“Y-Yeah,” Jung Ha-Yan replied.

“Miss Jung Ha-Yan…”

“S-Sora, I-I…” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

“Yes!” I shouted.

“I-I… I think… I became the God of Magic. I’m still lacking, but…” Jung Ha-Yan paused.

“Yes! The people that trust and love you—”

“I-It’s thanks to those idiots,” Jung Ha-Yan interrupted.

“What?” I asked.

“Looks like even fools can be helpful at times. D-Don’t you agree?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“No… t-that’s…” I stuttered.

“C-C-Come here… Sora,” Jung Ha-Yan instructed.

I knew something was wrong when I saw a massive stream of mana slowly making a beeline for me.

“I’ll turn you into an angel,” Jung Ha-Yan explained.

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1. Han Sora’s POV] ☜

CHAPTER 842
THE LAST (75)

I[1] saw wings of magic covering the sky, and the people who were staring at the sky started rubbing their eyes in disbelief. The mages casting spells, the people praying for the archmage, and those who had pulled out their swords to fight the undead creatures all stared at only one person.

I didn't hear any cheers at all; they simply stared dazedly as if they had lost all ability to think. The sight of the archmage spreading her magic wings was *that* unrealistic. It was the process of one human obtaining holy power, shedding their mortal coil, and reaching the next level.

It wasn't something that could be simplified. Colorful and shining magic circles appeared, blocking the dark demon's magic. Four pairs of wings enveloped Laios as if saying it was going to support their faith and not lose to evil.

- I-It's an angel! Mom, look over there! It's an angel!

- The archmage of the Sacred Democratic Country…

- So beautiful.

- What's… going on, sir?

- How… can we define that… as magic? *Haha*… This is Miss Jung Ha-Yan's powers; it's not because of magic. I thought it was just an absurd joke, but it seemed that she had truly become the God of Magic… She had gone beyond her limits to save the continent…

- The God of Magic…

- It feels like every single particle of mana throughout the continent is celebrating her birth.

Jung Ha-Yan became even stronger and stronger as more murmurs entered my ears.

A mage playing with this long white beard stared at the sight with an innocence that betrayed his age.

- Wings of Magic.

-…

- Her wings match her innocence.

- You're right. The wings are so pure that they seem to capture the purity of Miss Jung Ha-Yan.

- Now, I can't even smile while praying…

It was so shocking that my mouth wouldn't close.

"Shit… what's going on?" I mumbled.

I noticed Jung Ha-Yan's wings absorbing the nearby mana.

"What the hell is going on?" I questioned.

Seeing that she was absorbing the holy power around her made me think that she was waiting for this moment. I couldn't help but get goosebumps when she smiled, tightened her fist, and trembled.

It seemed that I wasn't the only one who thought that way. Park Deok-Gu was cheering for Jung Ha-Yan while blinking his huge eyes, but Han Sora, who was wrapped in the massive stream of mana, was struggling to get as far away from it as possible. The stream of mana grabbed Han Sora's ankle and started pulling her away.

Han Sora crawled away to escape, but the stream of mana didn't allow her to escape.

- *Kyaaah!* Miss Jung Ha-Yan! Miss Jung Ha-Yan!

-…

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan! I'm scared. I-I'm scared. Please forgive me. Forgive me!

'Shit, of course, it's scary since she's forcefully changing a human into an angel.'

Anyone would be scared at the thought of suddenly changing into a different race, and the stream of mana had wrapped around her as well, so it was quite scary *visually*. It also wasn't possible to transform a human being into an angel through ordinary means, so Han Sora was definitely going to feel some pain.

There was a slightly easier method, but as someone who had just started using holy power, Jung Ha-Yan had yet to figure out that method. Moreover, it was like turning Han Sora into an angel as soon as possible was the only thing that was on her mind right now.

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan… Jung Ha-Yan…!

The giant stream of light engulfed Han Sora. She managed to stretch her hand outside the light, but it was eventually engulfed as well. Soon…

- *Uh…*

- I-It's okay now, Sora.

Han Sora appeared with a pair of transparent black wings on her back.

She definitely struggled a lot during the process because her face was covered in tears and snot, but the wings on her back caught her interest, prompting her to look back at it.

It seemed that she was still scared, as I could see her glancing surreptitiously at Jung Ha-Yan. However, Han Sora only bit her lips upon seeing Jung Ha-Yan's exhausted look.

- W-Were you… really scared?

-…

- W-Was it painful?

- I'm fine now.

- I'm glad…

- I'm okay… for now.

- I-I'm really… glad…

'You shouldn't feel relieved. Think about how shocking it must've been for her when she suddenly turned into an angel. Also, are you really okay?'

I had a feeling she used a lot of mental power, magic, and holy power to change Han Sora. She seemed like she wouldn't have any trouble breaking up the falling clump of mana, but she had to be in bad condition because her lips were trembling.

There was a loud boom, and the clump of demonic mana crushed Jung Ha-Yan's wings again, but all she did was spread her arms out and shout.

'You're not acting, right?'

Ha-Yan was fierce.

- *Argh… Yaaaaaaaaaaaah!*

It wasn't that I disliked it. I actually liked it. It was just that—no, it wasn't a bad thing at all; she simply had a cunning side.

- I'll protect you. I'll protect S-Sora… Deok-Gu oppa… and… Yeah.
Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

A deafening boom echoed as Jung Ha-Yan's wings descended. The audience members screamed. Some prayed, some cheered for her, and some sent her their strength. The mages of the Magic Tower sent their mana toward Jung Ha-Yan.

If she were just acting, she would have been celebrating inwardly. Our Ha-Yan had learned many things from watching, so she was doing that on purpose, right? We weren't in danger, right?

- I can protect everyone! I-I can do it…

Blood dripped down the lips that she was biting. I looked away for a moment and saw that her condition had deteriorated to a great extent when I looked back at her. Her wings, which were absorbing the mana in the air, fluttered and crumbled.

Han Sora stared in a daze at the stupefying size when…

- *Haa… haa…* I-I can protect everyone…

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan!

Han Sora got up and roared. It was a sight that brought tears to my eyes—as long as it wasn't made up. How could one not cry when a petite, weak-looking mage was using all her might to fight evil?

Han Sora standing next to Jung Ha-Yan was fighting back desperately, and she seemed to have forgotten about the earlier event as she was nodding to herself. Of course, I believed she was nodding to herself to brainwash herself.

- W-We can do it. Hang in there, Miss Jung Ha-Yan.

- T-T-Thanks… Sora.

It was probably because they were in an extreme situation, but…

'No, who wouldn't fall for that?'

It was the same thing as pro wrestling. It was scripted, but it was actually dangerous. I wanted to see the guy who taught Jung Ha-Yan those things.

'She's a pretty fast learner… and it's scary.'

She was resourceful, and she was cunning. Jung Ha-Yan was acting like her true self upon realizing that more and more holy power was entering her body the longer she maintained the show.

Obviously, she wouldn't be able to come up here immediately, as she had yet to sign a contract, but I was worried that she was going to accomplish something different.

The fact that she had already created her own angel was abnormal, but… I could probably stop worrying.

"Not bad," I commented.

It was all because Jung Ha-Yan had basically created a good opportunity for our team.

"Nice. Our Ha-Yan is doing well…" the demon-summoning scum mumbled as if he had

been waiting to say that line.

— You did something stupid, fake bastard. The card you have been saving has become worthless…

I was sure the plague scum thought the same thing as the demon-summoning scum.

—…

'He's at a loss for words.'

— It's a useless struggle.

The plague scum wanted to maintain his image by talking nonchalantly, but…

— She's doing well blocking it, but she's just lucky. I have prepared many things and only one of them didn't work as planned, so I haven't lost to you yet.

— The fake thinks he isn't losing. There's nothing easier than fighting an idiot who thinks he won't lose. Your arrogance will suffocate you.

— You insects are the ones that are going to lose. My thoughts aren't born from my arrogance but from my confidence, and your struggle won't influence the result at all. Look at the battlefield. What's left? In the end, there's nothing you can do. The meaningless tug-of-war with the frontline is slowly getting boring. You seem to be thinking that you can control this large battlefield through small gains, but it's futile.

— I have never joined the battlefield, you fake. I had fun with you, but…

—…

— I must give up my position.

'Yeah, the demon-summoning scum is right.'

He had never joined the battlefield at all, and he was doing his best to take control of the situation. Unfortunately, it was just a bluff. Of course, he wasn't lying when he said that he was going to give up his position.

The scum's role had always been connecting the bridge. There had been many

arguments and difficulties, but he managed to build a durable bridge within just a short period of time.

As expected, a path toward the frontline had opened up.

Those unable to read the battlefield couldn't see anything, but the battlefield was unfolding in my eyes. I was sure the plague scum was staring at this scene as well. He was staring at the meaningless tug-of-war on the battlefield and at the sturdy bridge that was being built on the battlefield that favored small gains.

The plague scum was frowning, so I was definitely right. The result had to have hurt his pride, but it was probably better for him to think about the next step because we weren't the only ones watching this right now.

Jin Cheong wasn't saying anything, but the red beast stepped onto the sturdy bridge with confidence. The beast walked slowly down the bridge before picking up the pace and eventually sprinting toward her destination.

The plague scum didn't say anything and just watched as the beast approached him quietly. He probably realized that he couldn't describe her as a lowly human or a mere insect. The red beast finally reached his battlefield and let out a loud roar.

- Let's go!

-…

- Let's go, brothers and sisters!

- *Roaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaar!*

- For the Red Mercenary Guild!

- For the Red Mercenary Guild! For the God of War!

A red tide washed over the rotten earth.

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1. Lee Ki-Young's POV ☜

CHAPTER 843
THE LAST (76)

The scene was so fiery that I could feel the battlefield's heat, but I was sure that not everyone enjoyed the scene. Anyone who once stood on a battlefield would never enjoy such a sight. Many allied troops were injured, and one had to keep swinging one's sword or spear at the enemy troops.

A cacophonous din of screams and groans pervaded the battlefield. The pungent and foul smell lingering in the air was making it hard to breathe. The troops were covered in both sweat and blood, and they could no longer differentiate between foes and allies.

The battlefield was scary to ordinary people, and they'd never want to go back to a battlefield, but there were people who enjoyed the gory battlefield. The brigade scums, psychopathic murderers, and retired or veteran mercenaries addicted to war enjoyed moments like this. I honestly couldn't understand what it felt like to be addicted to war, but I felt like I was starting to understand it as I stared at the Red Mercenary Guild.

'They're definitely special.'

- Let's go, my brothers!

- *Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!*

- Let's fight, brothers!

- Don't stop moving! Charge! Charge! Charge!

- Charge! Charge, you bastards!

- Don't die, brothers! Live so we can see each other again!

'Seriously… '

I knew from the start the Red Mercenary Guild was a fierce guild, but they were more disorganized than I thought.

There were guys like Choi Young-Ki, who were capable of looking at the situation objectively. They were muscleheads capable of being rational. If I were asked what they were like, I'd say the Red Mercenary Guild members had good manners.

There were also quite a few stylish muscleheads among them. Of course, the rules of the guild had transformed them into such a chaotic bunch, but their image was already changing, so…

'I almost forgot that it was Cha Hee-Ra who was controlling those troublemakers.'

So they would definitely become either criminals or troublemakers if they ended up getting kicked out of the guild.

- Kill them! Kill them!

- Die, you dirty bastards! Mages, we need support! Support!

- Move it! Move!

- Come one! Come at me, demon bastards! Fight me!

'It's such a mess.'

This wasn't the first time the Red Mercenary Guild had stood on a battlefield, but I still couldn't quite get used to seeing them like this. They didn't fight like trained soldiers; they were more like beasts without their leash.

'They're seriously a mess.'

Some of them fought bravely with axes in hand, while others stood at the helm with a shield above their heads. In a nutshell, they all had their own different fighting styles.

It had to be really hot on the battlefield, as some were fighting without their armor. There were also quite a few mages among them who fought in close-quarters combat using their staff as a blunt weapon.

A few members threw their weapons at their enemies, while some of the mages

couldn't stop smiling after nullifying the enemy attacks.

I also saw some of them fighting recklessly, pulling out arrows lodged in their arms. I saw some scanning the battlefield with a maddened gaze. They were such a mess that I finally understood why they were on a leash this whole time.

— They're like savages.

"Now you're calling them savages?" I questioned.

— I designed this battlefield. I no longer have the desire or right to step in, but it makes me feel uncomfortable watching that fight. I'd rather not watch.

"Stop pretending you have class. I mean, what would you know when you grew up with a silver spoon in your mouth? Class doesn't exist on battlefields," I told him.

— Stop trying to insult me by framing me with nonsense information, Lee Ki-Young. I'm not trying to be classy, but…

"But?" I asked.

— But there are things we should maintain. You can't call that a war. I actually want to ask how they're different from drunk and cheap mercenaries who fight in bars. The Red Mercenary Guild is one of the three guilds in Lindel, but that's how they act? I was the one who opened up the path for them, so I feel like I've become scum like them.

"That's why you're here, Commander. You know nothing. You've never experienced a battlefield that is as fiery as that battlefield, as all you do is sit in a chair and come up with strategies. This is why people with non-combatant jobs are no good. They're too busy discussing things…"

— At least I—

"I haven't told you this, but I have more experience out there than you, Commander. I can go there and adapt well because I am built different, Commander," I interrupted.

— That's a load of bull that is not even worthy of entering my ears.

'This bastard.'

Jin Cheong frowned, looking dissatisfied.

I understood his feelings, but I was sure he didn't mean the comment he had made just now. He was simply annoyed, or he didn't want to agree with what I said. There was no way he would understand why the Red Mercenary Guild was doing well despite fighting recklessly like that.

After all, it was directly opposite of the values that he had established—no, I was sure those ideas had shattered the moment he saw them fight.

Basically, he had been using the continent as his stage, and he had experienced so many battlefields that he could write a dissertation about war.

I was sure he had come up with his own definition of war after going through many trials and errors. He was already an arrogant bastard, so he was definitely proud of his dissertation. Unfortunately, a brand-new theory emerged, threatening his dissertation—no, it wasn't just now. The theory could debunk his dissertation.

'They definitely don't look organized.'

It was simply indescribable. They weren't really working as a unit, and they weren't in line either. They just charged recklessly at their enemies, and I didn't even see a commander among them.

I saw guys with commander badges, but they were too focused on slamming the heads of the demons with their axes. I saw guys cursing while foaming at the mouth and others covered in demon blood.

Honestly, it was hard to tell who was part of the demon faction, and the battlefield was so violent that the demons looked like victims. I couldn't even use this for publicity purposes, but…

'Why do they seem like they're in sync?'

There was definitely a pattern in how they were moving; they weren't shouting out bullshit just for the sake of achieving results.

They looked like they were running around randomly, but it seemed like all of it was planned. They were minimizing the casualties, and there were patterns that the enemy couldn't even see. It was like they were moving as one. They were making up

for each other's weaknesses, and the way they gathered to create one big picture was…

"Perfect," I said.

It was like a perfect piece of artwork.

'I'm sure they can't do that again even if they wanted to do so.'

This sight was definitely just a coincidence. Their body had to have gotten so used to their team plan that things just happened to go swimmingly for them out here.

If Cha Hee-Ra weren't the leader of this war, this wouldn't have happened. They only broke the rules of the guild and abandoned their leash, as Cha Hee-Ra had allowed it.

Now that I thought about it, Cha Hee-Ra made this decision…

'Because of the demon-summoning scum.'

Ironically, this scene was made possible because of the sturdy stage that the genius commander of the Republic had created for Cha Hee-Ra.

- Kill them! Kill them!!!

- Charge! Don't stop! Don't look back and move forward!

There were screams everywhere.

Cha Hee-Ra was holding an axe and a greatsword, which were two-handed weapons, in each hand, and she swung them randomly. Enemies hit by the greatsword were sliced in half, and those hit by the axe were crushed. The ground cracked with her every step, and a gust of wind would blow around her every time she moved.

I was hearing sound effects that I had never heard before. The Soldiers of God, who had followed the path made by the God of War, looked at her and gave it their all. They trusted and followed her lead.

Cha Hee-Ra blocked the enemy's attack with a shield and took a step into the darkness while laughing like a maniac. She had faith that she was not going to die—no, it was more like she wasn't afraid to die. She seemed to be thinking that even if

she ended up dying, it was all going to be fine because she'd end up in Valhalla—the grave of warriors.

"The God of War is with us!"

"The Red Mercenary Guild is with us!"

"Today, this place will be our grave! We're going to be by the God of War's side and experience the most honorable death. Fight! Warriors! Let's fight! My comrades! Let's fight! Brothers and sisters! Let's fight! For the God of War!"

"No one can stop the God of War! As always, we'll be singing songs of victory!"

'Oh my, they must be drunk.'

It was like they were on drugs or something. They were drunk on the madness of the battlefield. They were roaring words that people wouldn't normally say.

'I finally understand why Ahn Ki-Mo couldn't adapt.'

It was funny just imagining him standing awkwardly among the muscleheads of the Red Mercenary Guild. I finally realized why he was so desperate to join the Blue Guild. They sang songs of victory and songs praising the God of War and Cha Hee-Ra was laughing amidst all that.

She stomped on the enemies as if they were mere insects. She said nothing, but her actions spoke more than a thousand words as to why they needed to have faith in her.

Kabooooooooooooooom!!

She had overwhelming power.

Craaaaaaaaaaaaack!

She had an overwhelming and awe-inspiring strength.

"*Ha… hahahahahahahahaha!!*"

"Magic! Mage!"

“Forward! Forward! Don’t look back!”

“I’ll die beside the God of War!”

“I’ll give my life for the God of War!”

‘They’re crazy.’

It was difficult to cross the bridge that the demon-summoning scum had created, but they were not stupid enough to ignore the path that the plague scum opened. He tried to reinforce the frontline or take care of the openings by dispatching troops, but those actions were all meaningless.

I thought the soldiers led by the God of War were already at their limits, but I was mistaken.

‘I’m sure he’s surprised as well.’

—…

‘Of course, he must be really annoyed, too.’

The plague scum was probably more stressed out than the demon-summoning scum.

—…

‘…’

— You disgusting insect… how… how dare you!

Kabooooooooooooooom!

A deafening boom echoed. I saw Cha Hee-Ra grabbing the plague scum’s head with one hand and slamming him into the wall.

Craaaaaaaaaaaaack!

- It’s been a while, darling.

- *Youuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu!!* You’re just a crazy bitch who doesn’t know her place!

- Shut up, you fool.

Cha Hee-Ra's powerful fist landed on his face.

Booooooooooooooooooom!!!

'Oh no... I can't watch this.'

Booooooooooom!

Craaaaaaaack!

Kabooooooooooooooom!!!

'I really can't watch this... '

CHAPTER 844
THE LAST (77)

The noises pervading the battlefield were so loud that there was no way the collision of mere human flesh could have made those noises. A shockwave would appear every time she swung her fist.

The way she punched the plague scum with the latter's head in her hand reminded me of the fight with Cherubim, but the plague scum was more pitiful than Cherubim at the time. It was awful seeing his frail figure flying around like some ragdoll.

He looked like me, so it seemed like I could feel his pain.

He was getting slammed into walls, and he was trying to resist while he was bouncing off of those walls, but he couldn't protect himself at all, which was a testament to just how fierce Cha Hee-Ra's attacks were.

There was a deafening boom, and he struck a wall once again.

The red beast was soon above him. She clasped her hands together and slammed it down on the plague scum's chest like a hammer. The plague scum tried to get up afterward, but Cha Hee-Ra immediately kicked his face.

Of course, he flew away and struck another wall.

'No mercy.'

I could still remember the time when Kim Hyun-Sung hit me.

'He's probably thinking that he wants to go home, and he no longer wants to do this.'

One punch was enough to bring him back to his senses, and Cha Hee-Ra was the one punching him instead of Kim Hyun-Sung, which was worse. Moreover, Cha Hee-Ra was intent on actually killing him; she was not playing around at all.

The plague scum was made to be a better version of me in both stats and physique,

but there was no guarantee that he would not die after taking too much damage from Cha Hee-Ra's attacks. It would be understandable if he chose to retreat right now, but I knew he wouldn't do that, as there were too many variables in place.

Moreover, they were close to Rimoura's nest, which was the plague scum's battlefield. In other words, they were fighting on the plague scum's home ground rather than Cha Hee-Ra's home ground.

I had no idea what was going on, but it seemed like the plague scum had become a punch sponge. He had to have done something to evenly distribute the damage to him onto something else. There was also a huge chance that he had installed safety devices all over the place to protect his frail figure.

Hee-Ra noona realized something amiss with her punches, and she looked dissatisfied with it.

'Who made our Hee-Ra feel this way?'

Cha Hee-Ra definitely thought that decapitating the plague scum would end everything, as she swung her axe with all her might.

However, a large tentacle extended out from a wall and blocked her attack.

Crack!

The axe split the tentacle into two, but it wasn't a bad move, as the tentacle was there to buy time.

If the plague scum had the right to control Rimoura's nest, then he could definitely control the overall situation.

It was then that I saw tentacles stretching out from all directions to attack Cha Hee-Ra.

However, Cha Hee-Ra only smirked at the terrifying sight and swung her axe again, but the tentacles had already covered the entire nest.

A room filled with tentacles wasn't a great sight, and the way they were getting crushed and split into two made the scene look even more grotesque. I saw foreign substances bursting out from the tentacles' wounds, and the sight made me frown.

‘I remember that video.’

I was desperate at the time, and I needed the courage to sacrifice myself to create a great piece of work. Now that I was staring at it from the sidelines, though, it appeared even more disgusting to me.

Boooooooooooooom!!!

The wriggling tentacles regenerated, divided, and merged. The nest was filled with colors that made me feel uncomfortable, and the sight was more bizarre than the sights I had ever seen in any other dungeon.

‘I have no idea what to do.’

There seemed to be an endless number of tentacles. Hee-Ra noona fought valiantly against the tentacles, but they'd simply recover from their wounds and attack her again.

The tug-of-war between Cha Hee-Ra and the tentacles didn’t seem like it was going to bring great results.

'The dungeon's gimmick is actually still available?’

Back then, Rimoura’s Nest had the same gimmick. Her role was to absorb mana from the humans she had captured and use that mana to maintain the nest and her troops.

The nest seemed a bit stronger than the nest at the time, but they had the same tricks and features. I was sure Hee-Ra noona knew about this as well, as she had an exceptionally deep connection with Rimoura’s nest.

However, Cha Hee-Ra only swung her weapons without doing anything else. She moved forward while ripping apart the tentacles that were bothering her, and the speed at which they were getting destroyed was faster than their regeneration speed.

It was like the dungeon’s regeneration rate couldn’t handle her.

Soon, a deafening noise echoed, and the red warriors flooded into the nest.

“They knew,” I said.

It was like they were patiently waiting to clear the dungeon. They charged at the demons as if they had been waiting for this opportunity. The soldiers following the God of War moved deeper to shatter the mana that had been maintaining this dungeon.

— You dirty insects!

-…

— You dirty insects! How dare you! I'll kill you all! I-I'll… kill you all! You bastards!

-…

— It's the same for you, you disgusting red bitch! I won't forgive you for this! Don't think all of you will make it out alive. This place will be your grave. None of you will survive…

-…

'He sure talks a lot for someone who has wrapped himself up with a giant bone shield.'

— Shit… shit! You bastards!

'His fury is a worthy sight to see.'

The plague scum was getting so emotional that I was worried he was losing it. He was based on Doom Ki-Young, so how come he had deviated so much from it? It seemed that his character was not made accurately.

It felt like he was moving away from his role as the Plaguelord. I could brush it off as an assumption or an error, but when I saw him mumbling to himself, I became convinced that the plague scum before me was the dummy version of me.

— I can't lose. I can't lose… in a place like this… damn it.

Of course, it only lasted for a moment.

'I don't need to think too much about it.'

Nothing would change even if my assumption ended up being correct, and I was sure

he felt wronged about all this. He had been handling things pretty well. The plague scum had done everything right—his plan was going swimmingly, and he was dealing effective damage to our side. He had even surprised us, but that was all.

He was unlucky.

He was incredibly proud of his smarts, but Jin Cheong had crushed him thoroughly. In addition, his plans were ruined by Jung Ha-Yan. I didn't even need to mention his fighting skills, as Hee-Ra noona was beating him up.

It was safe to say that he had lost.

'He lost the moment Hee-Ra noona entered the nest… '

I was sure he had his reasons, but we had our reasons as well.

'I mean, there's nothing you can do. You're just a fake, after all.'

"Just leave. This is our true power after uniting as one, you plague scum!" I shouted.

— I won't… I won't lose here.

"Have a taste of the power of light and the power of our comrades. Hee-Ra noona! Beat him up for me!" I yelled.

— I can't… I can't fall in a place like this!

"You should say something as well, Cheongji hyung," I suggested.

—…

— Damn it… damn it… You really think I'll just give up like this? You think I'm going to lose… after you bastards have insulted me? Do you have any idea what I had to sacrifice to get here?!

"Stop talking nonsense and just go home! You're nothing but a clump of data! How dare you try to be equal to humans!" I said.

— You scums will never understand what I had to put on the line to get here…

“That might actually be a breach of contract, you bastard. All you do is mumble because you’re all worked up…” I said.

— I can’t lose. I-I-I… can’t…

As expected, the plague scum grabbed his head, and it was probably because he knew that he had crossed the line. The scum couldn't even breathe properly, but he did not stop fighting Cha Hee-Ra, who was swinging her weapons toward him even now.

The result was pretty obvious, so I wasn’t really nervous about the fight, but it was definitely a battle worth watching. He maintained a certain distance from Hee-Ra noona, sending his ghosts and tentacles at her along with a colossal bone he had summoned.

Craaaaaaaaaaaack!

The plague scum let out an uncharacteristic roar.

— *Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!*

His desperation to win made me feel like crying, but in the end, he was just a villain. Of course, he was an excellent source of holy power as well.

The colossal bone rose high up in the air and attacked Hee-Ra noona, but Hee-Ra noona punched it, destroying it in one hit.

The tentacles that the plague scum had planted to sweep Hee-Ra noona off her feet were crushed, and the plague he had prepared couldn’t even break through her immunity. I heard a *sizzle*, and it sounded like acid had touched her skin, but he wasn’t the only one capable of self recovery.

— Die! Just die! Pelase! Just die! You crazy monster!!!

Who could stop the red warrior armed with courage and the power of justice?

— Shit… shit… Fuck…

- Just rest now.

— Shit… *Haa… haa…*

You have no hope.

— *Ha… haha…*

-…

— *Hahahahahahaha!*

‘I think he’s losing it.’

— *Hahahahahahahahahaha!*

-…

— I’m going to win.

-…

— This is me. It’s my victory, you dirty and disgusting fools.

“Oh no, he really lost it,” I commented.

I was surprised by the sudden change in his expression, and Jin Cheong seemed surprised by his condition as well, as the latter was quietly analyzing the plague scum.

And that was when the plague scum was suddenly enveloped in a mysterious mana. I was worried that he was going to blow himself up, but that wasn’t it.

I couldn’t see him because he was wrapped up in a dark-colored mana.

“You cunning bastard,” I commented upon finally realizing what was going on.

I couldn’t help but wonder how this story was going to end.

“You’re seriously a sly bastard!” I shouted.

The plague scum was starting to transform, and I had seen this before. He looked

different, but he had definitely taken on Belial's form.

'Was I too dumb?'

The plague scum grew in size and swung his arm, sending Cha Hee-Ra flying away.

'How come I did not think of that until now?'

How could I forget that the incident did not end with the Plaguelord's death but had ended after a fight between Belial and Benigoa?

'Damn it… '

The condition for clearing the main event wasn't defeating the plague scum. It was…

"Summoning Benigoa," I said.

I was sure that kind of event was necessary. If he was trying to recreate the previous ending by taking on Belial's form, then we had to summon Benigoa. We were supposed to get ready to summon Benigoa, and we could have known that in advance by studying the previous events. We should have been more cautious about this event as well.

"That bastard has actually employed a bluff!" I exclaimed. We got backstabbed using the oldest trick in the book. The plague scum wanted us to think that Rimoura's nest was the stage and had limited the battlefield to himself.

He had created so many hidden puzzle pieces and made sure that we wouldn't think about the easter eggs or the hidden clues. He had ensured that we would only focus on him rather than think about the dungeon event or ways to clear the quest.

It was a gamble and an unreasonable move, but in the end, we…

"You fell for it. Fuck… you stupid demon-summoning bastard!" I roared.

—…

"You useless fool!"

The giant plague demon charged out of Rimoura's Nest and showed himself.

I was sure everyone looked up at the sky at the same time.

— I'm…

- The winner.

Everyone looked up except for one person.

CHAPTER 845
THE LAST (78)

It was definitely the best move in the plague scum's eyes. The process was kind of different, but if I were in his place, I would do something similar.

I would hide the event's clear condition and make everyone focus on me.

It turned out that everything so far was a bluff and was part of a greater script. His arrogant expression, the fact that he called humans "lowly insects," and the fact that he stayed calm while getting beaten up were all part of the script. Of course, the clump of mana's fall on Laios was part of the script as well.

I immediately became convinced that he was indeed designed with me in mind.

He was cautious but bold. He had insurance and had rolled the dice when he thought it was the best time to do so. He had made the right choice, as he had fooled both Jin Cheong and Jo Hye-Jin, and the result was proof of his success.

Everyone looked up at the sky, staring at him, who had become the incarnation of the great Belial. He started swinging his colossal sword. I couldn’t find Benigoa, who had stopped the Plaguelord’s event at the time.

We could not see Benigoa, as we had overlooked summoning her.

‘I’m sure there was a hint somewhere.’

At the time, there weren't quarantine zones, there weren't so many people infected by the plague, and the high priests weren't so busy at the time. There were also not as many suffering families at the time.

The clump of mana had not fallen on Laios as well, and the order hadn't used their holy power to purify the land…

‘Those were the conditions.’

The clues were definitely among those incidents. The key was probably clearing those quests by collecting holy power or summoning the incarnation of Benigoa.

Weren't games just like that? Clearing the quest line meant receiving rewards, and I was sure the plague scum was doing the same thing.

We were clearing his quests for him while dealing with him.

“Is it too late to try now?” I questioned. It was a bit late, but it could work.

Normally, one could gather more holy power in times of crisis, and the event wasn't over just yet.

“Hye-Jin, ask the infected and the high priests in the quarantine zones if they can handle carrying out a few tasks. It's fine even if it's the smallest task, and I want you to ask Jin Cheong as well.” I instructed.

— Damn it.

‘It must’ve really hurt his pride.’

—…

‘He looks like he can't breathe?’

Jin Cheong had an excuse, as he had no idea what had happened at the time, but he had to have realized that there were other conditions that had to be met before the event could be cleared, as I saw him biting his lips.

He didn’t like the fact that he had missed it, and he was probably thinking that the plague scum had made a fool of him again.

The opponent he was having fun fighting with actually had other plans in mind. He definitely felt like he had fallen for the plague scum's tricks once again, so I understood why he was so angry, but there was nothing he could do about it.

‘You’re not the only one who fell for it… ’

If anything, I ought to have caught it.

— Lee Ki-Young, you idiot.

'What?'

— You're below average, damn it.

"You should've noticed it. How dare you blame me when you're the one who's been giving the orders?" I questioned.

— Forget it. I'm sure there's a way we can fix this. It's meaningless to blame each other right now.

"No, it's not meaningless. It's obviously your fault. You said you were in charge of one part of the event. You knew how the system worked, but you were having too much fun playing war… wouldn't it be strange if this hadn't happened?" I asked.

— Didn't you know about the event as well? You experienced this yourself as well. How could I have known about this when it happened after my death?

"You called yourself the Genius Commander, but the 'genius' must be silent. No matter what you say, it doesn't change the fact that you got a bit too careless and got a bit too carried away playing war. If I were in your shoes, I would…"

— What?

- *Ah!* Just stop already!

Jo Hye-Jin suddenly slammed her fist on the table.

"…"

—…

- I can't focus, so just stop. Sub Guild Master, if there's something you want to say, then say it yourself. The same goes for you, Commander. Do you really need to fight and bite each other's heads off to feel better?

— First of all, Lee Ki-Young should.

-…

— Fine, I'll stop… Damn it… Looks like I showed my ugly side. Shit… why did I…

"Look at you accepting the fact that it's your fault. Hye-Jin, let me say it one more—"

- Stop.

"…"

- Stop it.

"I'm just saying," I said.

- I sent Alps.

"*Ah…*"

- As you said, it might be kind of late, but I'm sure she can catch up. I'm sure she can…

"It's not a bad choice," I told her.

- Right.

I was sure we'd hear something soon since Alps' dog was really good at sniffing things out. If Jo Hye-Jin also believed that doing the event, even if it was late, was the right thing to do, then we might get results faster than expected.

Moreover, Hye-Jin was probably better than me when it came to clearing dungeons.

- I'm thinking about checking out the quarantine zones. We're conducting an investigation on the infected. We heard that the Temple of Lauren was the very first quarantine zone, so we'll follow that lead. Meanwhile, I want you two to find a way to deal with Belial's incarnation.

— Okay.

"How long do you think it'll take?" I asked.

- I'm not certain, but I'll do it as fast as possible. Alps? Yes. Head to the Temple of Lauren as soon as you arrive. I'll send a party to join you at the coordinates I'll send

to you later. If a battle breaks out or you need reinforcements, contact me right away.

“About three hours…” I said.

- The maximum time you can stay is about three hours. Keep in mind that you can get infected if you stay longer than that. The faster you get it done, the better.

Alps nodded and got off the griffon with Shiro before running with all her might. She had received buffs from the priests, so she didn’t need to hold her breath, but she still held her breath and headed to the infected area.

The denizens had been evacuated, so the ruins were quiet.

Jo Hye-Jin looked worried as she stared at the Goddess’ Mirror, but I was not worried about Alps.

— Die, lowly insects.

In fact, we had to worry more about the incarnation of Belial, who was still swinging his colossal sword. His sword was so huge that it was like a tower cleaving the air. Jin Cheong sent messages for the Belial raid, but I felt kind of relieved at the sight.

‘Hee-Ra noona.’

Cha Hee-Ra was smiling.

- *Hahahahahaha!*

Her arms were spread wide open as well.

“Tell her to get out immediately once it gets dangerous, Hye-Jin. I prepared something just in case,” I ordered.

- What?

—…

Obviously, I didn’t prepare anything, but it was undeniable that the one who'd bluff first would be the winner. Basically, the last man standing would win. Actually, Hee-Ra noona was supposed to get all the credit, but I thought it would be fine for me to

get a bit of credit.

The colossal sword fell.

Cha Hee-Ra lifted her greatsword and axe to block the oncoming attack.

Booooooooooooooooooooooooooooom!

The ground beneath Cha Hee-Ra sank.

The axe and greatsword cracked before shattering into innumerable fragments. Having lost her weapon, Cha Hee-Ra had no choice but to grab the colossal sword with both arms and bite her lips to withstand the pressure.

Cha Hee-Ra eventually gnashed her teeth as blood flowed out of her mouth. It seemed like her body was screaming in pain because her Strength was too low to handle the colossal sword. Despite that, she didn't look to be in pain; it was more like she was enjoying it. The incarnation of Belial, who had devoured the plague scum, poured his mana into the colossal sword, but Cha Hee-Ra didn’t take even a single step backward.

— Die!!!

- I'd win.

Kaboooooooooooooooooooom!

There was dust everywhere, but Cha Hee-Ra wasn’t injured.

After blowing out her nose and spitting out blood, she looked up quietly.

- Is this how I’m supposed to do it?

— What?

- I should be able to fight if I do it like this.

— W-What the hell… H-How are you…

And that was when a dark red light burst out of Cha Hee-Ra's back. It wasn't a pair of

wings, nor was it a light made out of mana, but it enveloped Cha Hee-Ra.

“Noona… I love you,” I confessed.

Just like how Belial’s incarnation had devoured the plague scum, the dark red light seemed to devour Cha Hee-Ra as well. Her figure grew in size, and something in the shape of an armor was created.

The incarnation of Belial swung his sword, and the Red God of War raised her arm to block the attack. The next moment, her figure grew once again. The Red God of War became as big as Belial and got up quietly.

— You m-monster…

- This is easy.

It felt like I was looking at a god. Just like the time when the giant Belial and Benigoa fought, the incarnation of Belial and the Red God of War pointed their weapon at each other. The word "overwhelming" was not enough to describe the sight.

A deafening noise seemingly capable of splitting both heaven and earth would reverberate every time their weapons clashed. I was not sure how they were pulling this off, and I even wondered whether Kim Hyun-Sung was capable of doing that or not, as the plague scum had not actually sacrificed his body to become Belial's incarnation.

It was possible, right? To be exact, the plague scum had wrapped himself in holy power to create the necessary shape for his transformation, and the system had recognized the ongoing situation as part of the event. The system then bestowed upon the appropriate stat increase to the plague scum.

It was easier said than done, though. Also, the process itself wasn’t easy.

However, I was astounded by the fact that Hee-Ra noona managed to copy him after seeing it once. I wasn’t sure if she had realized that holy power was accumulating inside of her or if she had used her advanced magic control abilities to create the shape necessary to achieve the system's acknowledgement, but she had placed an incarnation of herself inside her body.

It was unstable, but it was hard to believe that a human had managed to do that, so I

rubbed my eyes in shock.

There was no need to mention the Red Mercenary Guild, and the denizens of the Federation even thought that they were dreaming as they stared at the unbelievable sight.

- It's the Red God of War. It's her!

- It's really… the Red God of War.

Booooooooooooooooom!

Kabooooooooooooooooooooom!!!

- This is such an unrealistic battle… Did a human being… really create this sight?

- Miss Cha Hee-Ra…

Craaaaaaaaaaack!

Booooooooooooooooooooom!

Of course, a human being had created this sight.

I thought it'd be best if I commented here.

"Just according to plan…"

—…

"It was worth it having that insurance, Commander," I added.

—…

Jin Cheong glared at me as if he was telling me to stop talking bullshit, but one had to be shameless enough to seize victory.

"You're supposed to hide your best card even from your allies," I added.

CHAPTER 846
THE LAST (79)

It was best to say that we had borrowed the power of the demon-summoning scum to hide our true intentions. I'd just lift my chin and smirk. The demon-summoning scum couldn't see my face anyway. Moreover, atmosphere and immersion were more important than anything when it came to something like this.

"Everything worked out as expected," I said.

-…

"Everything worked out as expected. Hurry and tell him, Hye-Jin," I instructed.

-…

"Please. It's my lifelong wish. Really," I begged.

- Everything… worked out as planned.

"Just think about that massive quarantine zone and the strange events that happened recently—think about them, and you will find the answer. It's pretty obvious. Of course, I have no intention of blaming you if you can't see it, Commander.

"As you said, you have no idea what happened at the time, as you were already dead. *Ha… haha.* I'm not even going to bother blaming you," I said.

—…

"Your role is just to attract attention. I'm the real deal. Summoning the incarnation of Benigoa isn't a bad idea, but we need something that the plague scum will never see coming," I continued.

- Is that… true?

"He's a control freak, and I was sure he has everything in his grasp. Even if we

summon Benigoa's incarnation, he definitely has a way to deal with it. It's undeniable that there are some errors, but there are no mistakes in the results. Everything is going… just like this genius had planned…"

— How absurd.

Jin Cheong's face wasn't lying. At first, he thought I was just speaking some nonsense, but now, he was thinking about the possibility that my words might be true.

Although the chances were only around one or two percent, it could be considered a success as long as even the smallest doubt was planted successfully.

Jin Cheong had been backstabbed so many times through various methods that he seemed to be thinking that my unconvincing bullshit was *convincing*. I was sure that the demon-summoning scum's heart was filled with shame right now for being unable to see through my plan.

"The Red God of War and the Monarch of Lies. A battle worthy of the myths is unfolding. Isn't it an amazing sight?" I asked.

The colossal forms of the Red God of War and the Monarch of Lies fought each other.

The Monarch of Lies swung his sword, but the Red God of War didn't even retreat. She used her gauntlet-looking arm to defend herself before continuing her approach. From far away, it looked like a close match, but it actually wasn't the case.

The Monarch of Lies was probably losing. He stretched out his arm, and a vast amount of energy inundated the air. The energy that was trying to wrap itself around the Red God of War looked dangerous, but she twisted her body to tear it away from her before continuing her approach.

— Damn it… What the hell are you… Who are you?! How dare you come here and…

- Cha Hee-Ra.

— Damn it! Damn it! That's not what I was asking. I was asking *what* you were, damn it! Are you… really human?

- Isn't that answer enough? I'm Cha Hee-Ra.

—…

- Don’t define me by things like humanity or divinity. I’m just Cha Hee-Ra.

— You came out of nowhere… and… and you dare ruin my plan?! Y-You really think I’ll allow that? You’re nothing but a wicked being that suddenly interfered…

-…

Booooooooooooooom!!!

The God of War clad in red armor raised her fist and punched out.

The sight of such colossal beings fighting each other was surreal from a human's point of view. Perhaps it was because the weight of their moves was different from the weight of any human being's moves, but they looked kind of slow.

Debris would fly into the air every time they stepped on the ground, and shockwaves would burst out of them every time they collided against each other. The deafening explosions were so loud that it sounded like the sky was being torn apart.

The incarnation of Belial swung his sword, and the clouds split in response.

However, the incarnation of Belial was the one anxious rather than the Red God of War.

‘I’m sure he knows that he's going to be at a disadvantage in a long, drawn-out battle.’

Shiro was sniffing the air profusely, and he seemed to have picked up on something.

To make up for his mistake, Jin Cheong was trying his best to complete the Benigoa incarnation summoning quest. I was sure this wasn’t the most ideal situation for him because the card he had been hiding wasn’t enough to resolve this issue.

Cha Hee-Ra's display of strength was far from what humans were capable of doing, and it was a known fact that holy power was accumulating inside of her.

“Well, I think it’s safe to say it’s game over. It would be rude to watch any longer. Let’s watch something else. Also, don’t overdo it, Commander…” I said.

—…

He was not listening to me at all. The demon summoner wanted Cha Hee-Ra to lose more than anyone, but there was no way he could turn the tables now.

— I cannot lose. I won't die in a place like this. T-The weight I'm carrying is different from yours!

-…

— What I'm saying is that I'm fighting for a different reason.

- Don't prioritize values, you fool. Don't think the burden you're carrying is the only thing that's burdensome. If you want to prove something, then prove it by winning a fight. Fights are always like that. Both sides are fighting over each other's ideologies. I don't really understand what you're saying, but you're not the only one who's fighting for something here.

— I-I'm putting everything on the line to protect and maintain everything I have! W-What the hell could you be fighting for? You just run rampant all because you're obsessed with fights!

- My pride.

— What?

- My pride.

Kabooooooooooooom!!!

The axe in the Red God of War's hand buried itself in the neck of Belial's incarnation. The energy around Belial's incarnation scattered, and his transformation wore off. The plague scum threw up blood and rolled on the ground in an unsightly manner.

Cha Hee-Ra wasn't all that different.

Transforming into the colossal form of the God of War had to be really exhausting, as she looked kind of exhausted, which was unlike her. However, the look in her eyes remained the same. Just like how she said she was fighting for her pride, her eyes were filled with confidence in herself.

'That's right.'

Now that I thought about it, I was sure there wasn't an incident that had worn her out as much as the 27th Legion and the Plaguelord incidents. I was sure there had been incidents where she had lost confidence in herself, as those incidents weren't all about her. They happened because they were necessary to awaken Kim Hyun-Sung into the Sunset Swordsman. Those incidents were prepared just for him.

Cha Hee-Ra had not been able to do anything but look up at the fighters in every single major incident so far, including but not limited to the fight with Donovan, the Plaguelord, and even the fight with Belial's incarnation.

Cha Hee-Ra had to have been indescribably frustrated at the time. I guarantee that not being able to do anything hurt her pride, so she wasn't lying when she said that she was fighting for her pride.

- I fight for my pride.

Cha Hee-Ra was fighting to recover her pride and dignity. As she mentioned earlier, she was fighting to prove that she was Cha Hee-Ra.

— Don't make me laugh, damn it… It's not funny! That's all you're fighting for…

'He's really worked up.'

-…

— Pride? Dignity? Stupid bitch. Do you really think that's a good reason?

- Prove to me that you're right.

— *Aaaahhhh!!*

'He even looks pitiful now.'

I wouldn't act that way—no, perhaps I would act like that. Of course, I could not say for sure because I had never been cornered to that extent. He no longer had Belial's body armor, so it was funny seeing him charge at Cha Hee-Ra with no armor and his sword raised up high, which created a ton of openings Cha Hee-Ra could exploit.

He looked so awkward charging with only a few ghosts and a bone shield. It seemed that a non-combatant would always be a non-combatant, as he looked awkward as he charged at Cha Hee-Ra with gritted teeth.

Obviously, he had received multiple stats buffs, as he had installed several traps and had even spread the plague, but he was not balanced at all, so he couldn't really do much. Despite that, he charged at Cha Hee-Ra. Like a cornered rat trying to bite a cat, he did not stop charging at her despite falling down.

'Hee-Ra noona is actually a tiger, not a cat.'

There wasn't a hint of uncertainty in Cha Hee-Ra's eyes, which were full of pride. She just seemed like she was recognizing him as a warrior.

'Pride.'

— Aaaaahhh!

-…

The plague scum bit his lips, and their figures clashed along with their mana. The plague scum swung his sword awkwardly with his injured body.

I honestly couldn't believe what I was seeing because he had no chance of winning at all. I was sure he knew that charging at her like a madman wasn't the smartest move here.

'You really shouldn't do that.'

If I were him, I would lay flat on the ground because being acknowledged as a warrior by Hee-Ra noona only meant one thing—getting a bad ending. It'd be different if he were acknowledged as an ally, but as an enemy, the only thing that awaited him was a cold, lonely death.

'Why did you get into that kind of stance all of a sudden?'

- You're a warrior.

'That's a sign that he's going to die.'

— I’m not a warrior. *Haa… haa…*

It was impressive how she was subconsciously dodging his attack.

- No, you’re a warrior.

She was calling him a warrior.

— I’m not a warrior. I wasn’t born to fight. I just… just…

- It doesn’t matter how you were born. What matters is whether you’ve stepped up for what you value or not. You’re not my darling. Who are you?

— T-The Plaguelord… I… Damn it… I’m the Plaguelord. I’m the Plaguelord… and I was born to spread fear into the world… and to stomp on insects like you.

- Who are you?

— I told you… I’m… the Plaguelord.

- I’m Cha Hee-Ra. Who… are you?

— I… I…

- I just want to hear your name.

— I-I have no reason to tell my name to a beast like you.

The plague scum ran toward Cha Hee-Ra despite his injuries.

There wasn’t an ounce of sympathy in Cha Hee-Ra's eyes. The only thing that remained in her eyes was respect—respect toward her opponent, who had to die for her to reclaim her pride and dignity.

A massive bone rushed out from the earth beneath Cha Hee-Ra's feet, but it was just a mere distraction. The ghosts, bizarre tentacles, and everything else were to distract her. The plague scum spread mist and poison, going all out to get on her nerves and distract her.

In the end, the sword he swung pierced into Cha Hee-Ra’s chest because she didn’t

bother dodging his attack. After accepting the sword of the warrior whose name was still unknown to her…

- And your will?

— I have a favor to ask.

Cha Hee-Ra snapped his neck.

- I accept.

—…

-…

—…

[You've cleared the Plaguelord, one of the main events of the Mythic-rank dungeon, "The Continent Where the Son of Light Was Sacrificed."]

- Lee Ki-Young, you bastard. I’m seriously going to kill you once you come down here.

CHAPTER 847
THE LAST (80)

The plague scum definitely did not resemble me, but…

'His ending wasn't a bad ending.'

He had thrown himself into an impossible fight, so perhaps this outcome wasn't strange.

He knew that he had no chance of winning, so he took a massive gamble. The plague scum thought that earning Cha Hee-Ra's respect was one of the best options for him, as he had no more cards left.

It wasn't a bad choice. Yes, it was a gamble, but he had to have been confident with his chances.

I was sure he had long figured out the kind of person Cha Hee-Ra was, her way of living, and her nature. It was not like those two had a deep conversation or something, but it wasn't that hard to figure her out because Hee-Ra noona always showed the kind of person she was.

The plague scum had said that he wasn't a warrior, but he wanted to be treated like one, and his life finally came to an end. I had no idea whether he really got what he wanted or not, but Hee-Ra respected his choice and his death.

- I finally understand…

"*Huh?*"

- What you meant about that man being made based on your personality…

"What gave it away?" I asked.

- I can't explain it with one word, but… the willingness to sacrifice… I'm sure he had other cards up his sleeve.

"…"

- But he didn't choose anything. He decided to end everything with his death instead of sacrificing someone else to try once more. It must've been hard for him. Perhaps this ending was—

"I wouldn't have given up," I interrupted.

- He might've thought putting an end to this himself was better.

"That kind of thought is…"

- Just like you. He was exactly what you looked like during the war with the Outer Gods.

"It's kind of different from that, but… I agree that there are some similarities. Yeah…" I said. The plague scum was slowly fading. Seeing him disperse into an innumerable cluster of tiny stars was a sight worth seeing, but I wasn't like Jo Hye-Jin, who was having mixed emotions at the sight.

Cha Hee-Ra stared quietly at the sight and paid her respect to the warrior who had just perished. The next moment, she clenched her fists and congratulated herself for reclaiming her pride. I saw her smile, which was unlike her.

I was sure she had been nervous.

Cha Hee-Ra was confident that she could do it, but I was sure she couldn't ignore the tiny trauma deep inside her heart. In the end, she had overcome her struggles in her own way again and had achieved what she wanted to achieve. She got up nonchalantly and patted the backs of her guild members before walking away.

"So… what kind of clue…"

- I'll send Alps and check.

"Sounds good. There must have been something left behind. I hope there are many things to see since we've cleared the event properly," I said.

- There could be a hint. Maybe Miss Ji-Hye left something for you… or there might be clues about how we can handle the next event.

“Anyway, I want you to take care of that, Miss Ji-Hye,” I ordered.

- Okay.

“I want Hee-Ra noona to take care of the aftermath, but I think it’s better if I leave that to you,” I told her.

- What about you?

“I have to check up on Hyun-Sung,” I replied.

- Is the guild master okay?

I’m… not sure, but he probably wasn’t.

‘It’d be strange if he was okay.’

Even Cha Hee-Ra found it hard to face her own trauma. To make things worse, Kim Hyun-Sung was soft-hearted and had the biggest trauma out of everyone I know, so there was no way he’d be okay.

His mental health was on the verge of breaking like a cookie, and I was sure he was having a hard time moving his entire body. Perhaps the reason he had yet to face him was that he was scared.

‘Hee-Ra noona… ’

This was a huge gift from Cha Hee-Ra, and she knew exactly what was making Kim Hyun-Sung suffer. He'd definitely overcome it. I was worried about him knowing about the "third life," but I was sure he’d overcome it. He just needed an opportunity.

I looked turned and saw Kim Hyun-Sung looking at the plague scum covered in wounds.

I expected it, but it wasn’t a pleasant sight.

‘Was he hurt that bad? Maybe she overdid it a little.’

I thought the sight was a bit exaggerated. Blood flowed freely from both of the plague scum's arms, and the lacerations were so gory that it seemed as if they were made by

a saw blade. The plague scum's legs were in poor condition as well.

The sight was so horrible that I couldn't understand how he could still move.

His neck was badly bruised, and one side of his face was swollen. The wound on his abdomen was so horrible that I couldn't even look at it properly. It had to be really painful because he couldn't stop crying, and he was moving slowly while staining the snowy white mountain with his own blood.

It felt like it had been a while since I saw our lovely regressor, and he looked handsome as always, but his face was pale. He looked away with a nauseous face. His trembling hand was hesitating, and he looked at the plague scum quietly as if he wanted to say something, but he ended up shaking his head in the end.

The fact that Kim Hyun-Sung had acted that way wasn't a bad sign because the next event's clear condition was still unknown to us. We had no idea how the next event was going to be held, so this was better than being immediately hostile.

— Mr. Hyun-Sung.

-…

— Mr. Hyun-Sung.

-…

— Mr. Hyun-Sung?

-…

'This bastard is even talking.'

Obviously, the plague scum couldn't talk properly. In fact, it was a miracle that he could still talk.

- Yes…

— It seems like many things have happened.

- You're right…

— A lot happened from the moment we met up until now. We talked a lot, and I think about this every time, but we made a ton of memories. We were kind of awkward at first, but we became pretty close…

-…

— I don't blame you, Mr. Hyun-Sung.

'Damn it. Just what are you after?'

I thought his life was going to end with him saying, "You think you can kill me? I'll blame you forever and curse you forever," but the ending was more peaceful than I thought.

There was no hostility or anger toward Kim Hyun-Sung on the face of the slightly better made event NPC. He was actually looking at Kim Hyun-Sung as if he were giving the latter a warm hug.

He looked like a saint willing to understand everything.

— It's what I wanted, and I've been expecting this. I have always been watching the things that's been happening here. I did not stop looking for the necessary conditions that have to be met for us to live happily ever after, but my research always ended in this incident. I know I'm talking nonsense, but *this* was required to defeat them. Someone needed to sacrifice themselves to protect the continent, and I believe that I had to be that someone.

-…

— I just feel bad… for leaving you with a scar that cannot be washed away.

- I should… be the one… apologizing.

'What the hell? Why is he acting like that?'

'What the hell is going on? Noona, is it okay that this is happening? Are you fine with this warm atmosphere? I mean, Kim Hyun-Sung does look like he's in pain, like really bad—no, he looks like he's going to break down at any minute.'

I thought we'd experience a little bit of the previous incident through a few small

scenes because I had given him a sword, talked to him a few times, gave him courage, and even gave him whatever I could give to him.

It was too early to say that his mental state had recovered completely, but I had succeeded in stopping him from committing suicide at the very least, so I would say that it was an amazing psychotherapy.

Of course, there was no way the achievements that I had accumulated so far were going to crumble so easily just like this.

Kim Hyun-Sung's breathing was uneven, and there were tears in his eyes.

I wasn't sure what he was looking at, but it looked like he was looking down at his arms.

It was like he was checking to see if my blood was on him. He looked around, and perhaps it was because of the Regressor Instruction Manual, but it was getting harder for me to breathe as well.

He tightened his grip around the sword that I had bestowed upon him as if he was trying to calm himself down, but he immediately let go of the sword. Perhaps it was because of the cold feel of the metal, but he looked as if he had decided to face the harsh reality.

- All I can say… is that I'm sorry. I'm… I'm… really sorry. I… did something I shouldn't have… I… I… *Heuk…* What… d-did… did I do… *Ah… ahh…*

—…

- *Bleeeeeeergh…*

—…

- Mr. Ki-Young… Mr. Ki-Young.

—…

Kim Hyun-Sung looked so pitiful when he ran toward the plague scum. I was not sure if he really was the hero of the continent. What if he was the enemy? Obviously, I didn't sense anything like that from him, but he wasn't supposed to get close to the

plague scum, just in case he was a ticking bomb.

Kim Hyun-Sung started healing the plague scum. Was he even aware of the fact that the plague scum was a mere NPC of a dungeon event? Could he still distinguish real from fake? Did someone cast a hallucination spell or a subconscious-altering spell here?

- Stay still. *Heuk… heuk…* Your wounds… will only get worse.

—…

- Stop moving. It'll be dangerous… if you keep moving.

"That's not me…" I mumbled.

- H-How's your neck? *Heuk… heuuk…*

— I'm fine, Mr. Hyun-Sung. It's not painful, and I am not suffering at all. I'm just a fragment of his memories—a tiny fragment of his memories about him meeting his end here…

"I'm sure he's lying. Probably. It's such a ridiculous setup," I said.

— I wouldn't exactly call this a request, but I have a small favor to ask you, Mr. Hyun-Sung.

- What?

— Can you do me a favor?

- Y-Yes…

— Can you grant my wish?

The plague scum was probably going to ask him to kill him. That kind of line… was old…

— One more time.

- What?

The plague scum grabbed Kim Hyun-Sung's sleeve and looked up at him.

— Kill me again.

The plague scum looked at Kim Hyun-Sung with a strange expression that I had never made before, and the corner of his lips curled up as well.

"*Ah…* shit…" I cursed.

— Kill me… again.

[The Sacrificed Saint—a main event of the Mythic-rank dungeon, "The Continent Where the Son of Light Was Sacrificed" will soon begin.]

CHAPTER 848
THE LAST (81)

The plague scum was so spiteful.

"*Ah*, seriously, Lee Ji-Hye. *Ah*… man! You're mean. You're so… mean," I mumbled.

— Please… I beg you. Kill me… again…

-…

The setup was so devious and wicked that even demons would cut ties with him. I started questioning whether Ji-Hye noona was actually human or not. Of course, if she were in my shoes, I would do something similar, but I had to think about whether cornering someone this much was necessary or not.

Basically, this was so cruel that it was crossing the line.

'Just what in the hell is her goal?'

Think about it, and it was pretty obvious, so I didn't need to question it.

Her goal was Kim Hyun-Sung's destruction. She wanted to ruin him to the point that he wouldn't be able to recover from it. It seemed like she was building this up so that he'd become unable to wield a sword again.

She had to be trying to film a scene where Kim Hyun-Sung would cut off Lee Ki-Young's head and show it to the entire continent. She could have made Cha Hee-Ra or Jung Ha-Yan do that, but she wanted Kim Hyun-Sung to suffer.

If he stabbed me again…

'It's the end.'

He'd probably malfunction and become unusable like a blown fuse—no, not *probably*. I was sure that was going to happen. I had sacrificed many things trying to

restore the foundation of his mental health, so I was not confident about helping him get back on his feet if he crumbled once again.

As expected, Kim Hyun-Sung's gaze looked unsteady, and he seemed to question whether he had misheard the plague scum or not, but the details of the event didn't change. The important part was the reason—the reason he needed to kill Lee Ki-Young again.

It was different from the previous events, but if the war with the Outer Gods was the bigger picture she had in mind, then it was highly likely that Lee Ki-Young's death was the key.

— I don't… have a lot of time, Mr. Hyun-Sung.

-…

— Until *they* return…

-…

— They'll return. They'll be… more powerful and scarier. It's impossible to stop the prophesied day. Only my death… can stop them from reaching this place.

"How cliched…" I commented.

— That's… the only way to overcome this crisis. My blood will stop them.

'That's what I'm talking about. I would've done the same thing.'

It was a type of cliche one would normally see in classic fantasy. The plague scum resembled a saint prepared to sacrifice themselves to stop the end of the world. Of course, I was not going to use such a wicked tactic, but if I had no choice but to do so, I would do the same thing as the plague scum, as it was dramatic.

I wasn't sure whether the Outer Gods were really going to come again or not, but that wasn't important. The fact that Kim Hyun-Sung, who was suffering from selective panic disorder, had to make a choice and weigh between his friend's life and the continent was more important than anything.

Obviously, the plague scum wasn't his *real* friend, but he seemed to be thinking that

the tattered version of Lee Ki-Young before him was actually me.

— I beg you.

- N-No way…

—…

- It doesn't make any sense…

'Of course it does. That's what the event is about.'

- I-I won't allow it.

'Who do you think you are? You're irrelevant. You need to kill me, so what are you going to do if you don't do that? Also, he's not even the real thing. He's a fake.'

— But…

- I'm sure there's a way.

— There's no other way.

If there was one thing Ji-Hye noona had overlooked, it was the fact that Kim Hyun-Sung and I were connected. It meant we could communicate directly, but…

"Do you truly believe I… Sunset Swordsman. You're…" I paused.

At this point, I wasn't sure whether asking him to kill fake Lee Ki-Young was the right thing to do or not.

'Damn it.'

If I told him that the plague scum wasn't real, would Kim Hyun-Sung even listen to me? Was telling the miserable Kim Hyun-Sung to kill fake Lee Ki-Young even the right thing to do here?

He was the lovely regressor, but he looked pitiful and broken. I wasn't sure if he could even stab him in the first place because he wasn't in the condition to harm anyone.

His arms were shaking, and he couldn't even hold his sword properly. I was sure he was reminded of that cold feeling. He was probably recalling the time he had stabbed my abdomen because his gaze looked unstable.

'Man, I feel like trash.'

Kim Hyun-Sung seemed like he couldn't make any decisions, which probably annoyed him, and he had to assess the situation carefully because he lacked information, which was probably stressing him out.

'It's checkmate.'

This had to be a coincidence.

'If the dungeon spawned the Outer Gods or a being similar to them… '

"Can we even stop them?" I questioned.

I wasn't certain.

Actually, it was impossible.

It was the same with the Sacred Democratic Country's revolution, the Demon Summoner, and the Plague Scum, but the system's timing was spot on this time as well.

Only the selected one could carry out the quest, and they could not go back or retreat.

The quest was simple, but it was actually scarier.

As always, dungeons like this gave high rewards, but they were incredibly risky.

I started thinking about it from Ji-Hye noona's point of view, but I still couldn't imagine just how massive the payout was going to be if cutting off the head of the dying and tattered Lee Ki-Young was the risk that we had to take. She had to have created this event with that in mind.

It no longer mattered whether Kim Hyun-Sung would cut off the plague scum's head or not, as the winner would be…

'Ji-Hye noona.'

Of course, Kim Hyun-Sung cutting off the guy's head was good for me, as the thought of seeing the Outer Gods again was something I didn't even want to think about.

To be clear, I was not scared to go through that again. I was scared of not being able to figure out how many Outer Gods were going to appear the next time. I did not want to confront the possibility that I could lose once again.

— Please prevent the continent's destruction, Mr. Hyun-Sung. Please… Please save the continent again.

'I wouldn't have said that.'

-…

— I know what I'm asking you to do is difficult, and I feel bad asking you to do this. I'm sure it's difficult, and you probably don't want to do it, but…

If I were him, I would hand my responsibility to him or just ask him to prevent the continent's destruction.

However, Kim Hyun-Sung was so out of it right now that he hadn't caught on to that yet. He seemed frightened rather than confused. He was worried that he'd end up in a situation where he'd think that he was the worst human being to have ever lived and end up getting my blood on his hands again.

— It's not painful, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I won't be in pain. I'm sorry for forcing you to do something difficult, but… please protect this scenery.

-…

— I beg you.

'This is so annoying.'

What the hell was that anyway?

'What the hell man?'

Lee Ki-Young of the Sacred Democratic Country's Revolution was just an NPC, and if the plague scum was modeled based on Plaguelord Lee Ki-Young, then I had no idea what to call him.

He was definitely the plague scum, as he was emotionless. Despite that, he seemed to be capable of thinking and acting on his own. He was desperately trying to pull Kim Hyun-Sung in by shedding tears and expressing his emotions.

There were many confusing things, but one thing I was sure of was…

'He is not a simple NPC.'

Maybe…

'Ji-Hye noona?'

I was really not sure, but it wouldn't be strange at all if Ji-Hye noona had possessed that NPC. Of course, I did not really think that she was in that body, but it was highly likely that she was controlling him from afar. It was also proven by the discomfort I felt earlier after seeing a brand-new expression on the plague scum's face.

'Someone is controlling him.'

If it wasn't Ji-Hye noona, then it had to be one of the brigade members. It would be difficult to find the culprit, but things seemed so out of place that I was convinced of my assumption.

I started tapping my thigh. There wasn't a clear answer, but I felt the need to turn the tables on the board she had prepared for us.

I had to say something to Kim Hyun-Sung, who still looked dumbfounded.

"Give me your sword."

-…

"Give me your sword, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I repeated.

- M-Mr. Ki-Young? *Huh? Uh…*

— Please, Mr. Hyun-Sung…

- Mr. Ki-Young? Mr. Ki-Young… I…

“Give me your sword! You’re so annoying!” I shouted.

- What?

“Give me your sword! Gimme! Gimme! Gimme! Hand over your sword before I throw it away, you fool!” I yelled.

- *Ah…*

“Hurry up, you annoying bastard!” I cursed.

- O-Okay!

He unsheathed the sword I gave him and handed it over to the tattered Lee Ki-Young in a daze, so he definitely did it unknowingly.

‘It might be possible.’

If that NPC was really a puppet, then I could probably use it as well. He was created based on me; if Ji-Hye noona or the brigade scums could use him, then I should be able to use him as well, right?

He couldn’t feel any pain, and since he wasn’t really alive, the price I would have to pay to descend would not be that expensive. I had no idea how long I could last in there, but I could at least get myself killed by Kim Hyun-Sung.

“You probably weren’t expecting this, noona,” I said.

I felt like I was in a freefall. Although this was not my first time, I still couldn't get used to this feeling. The feeling of getting demoted in the strength department was the worst feeling ever, but I could still smile.

'I didn’t expect us to meet like this, and it’s been a while since we saw each other, right?'

BOOM!

The dummy regressor blinked like a fool and stared into space. I wasn't sure whether he had realized what had changed, but tears were falling from his golden eyes.

Kim Hyun-Sung bit his lips hard and lowered his head a little; the tears that had rolled down his chin landed on the ground. His sobbing was distracting me, and he still couldn't look at me properly.

"It's been a while, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I greeted.

"Yes… it's been a while. *Heuk…* It's really… really been a while, Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled. He smiled brightly. I was sure he'd start crying again soon, but for now, I saw him grinning at me.

CHAPTER 849
THE LAST (82)

'It really does feel like I'm seeing him for the first time in a while.'

I couldn't remember the last time Kim Hyun-Sung smiled like that.

'He seems really happy to see me.'

I wasn't sure if he was forcing himself to smile or if he was genuinely smiling at me, but he was smiling brightly.

His reaction wasn't all that different from Jo Hye-Jin, Park Deok-Gu, or Ha-Yan's reactions. He was probably relieved because I was talking to him as myself and not as the Son of Light and that I had decided to save him again.

I wanted to know his true thoughts using the Regressor Instruction Manual, but a deluge of emotions had inundated Kim Hyun-Sung, which made it difficult for me to deduce his thoughts.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he was having a panic attack, but he was starting to calm down, which meant my arrival was effective.

He seemed to be thinking about what he was supposed to say, how he was supposed to start the conversation, and if it was a good idea to act as usual. Unfortunately, there were so many things I needed to check up on, so I couldn't focus on his emotions.

'He doesn't seem to be feeling any physical pain.'

I was worried that he was in pain, but aside from feeling a bit uncomfortable, he seemed normal. His voice was hoarse, and he couldn't walk properly, but he wasn't in pain. It wasn't the worst-case scenario, as he didn't start screaming in pain as soon as I descended.

Wait…

'Am I not able to use his skills?'

It was similar to when I had descended into Hye-Jin's body.

'His physical capabilities are abysmal.'

I already knew this, but it looked like I couldn't do anything with this dying body. Unlike Jo Hye-Jin's body, where I felt like I could do anything, I couldn't feel anything in here but fatigue. It seemed like this body was actually made to die. Lastly…

'Can the plague scum hurt himself?'

Finding out if he could even take his own life was most important. It would be a pretty shocking act to Kim Hyun-Sung, but that was why he was here, anyway. I tried biting my tongue, but…

'It's not working.'

I knew this would happen, so I was not surprised.

'A safety device.'

I didn't think a safety device was installed on him with me in mind, but whatever the reason, Ji-Hye noona had prepared a way to resist external interference.

The system didn't want me to harm myself, and the only person who could do it was the target of this event, who was none other than Kim Hyun-Sung.

It made things a little more complicated, but it could be fixed. What else could he do if I convinced him? Once I had convinced him that this wasn't my real body, that this was necessary, and that I'd return someday, I was sure he'd understand it.

I nodded, and Kim Hyun-Sung started talking.

"Are… you okay?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"Yes. The body is a bit uncomfortable, but I don't feel any different. Let me tell you in advance that this isn't my real body, and it's a body that was created for the event that's taking place on the continent that has become a dungeon," I explained.

"*Ah*… I see," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"So you don't have to be shocked, and you don't need to look at me that way," I told him.

"Okay."

"I'm not in pain either. You must keep this in mind. Repeat after me. I'm…" I trailed off.

"Not in pain…" Kim Hyun-Sung continued.

"That's it. I looked like a mess on the outside, but I'm not related to this body at all. If I may add one more thing, everything this man said earlier is all lies. The elimination of this body is the actual quest, and if we don't get rid of him, we may have to experience the war with the Outer Gods again. Our goal is to eliminate this body. Do you understand?" I asked.

"…"

'He's not answering. Well, I expected it.'

"Our goal is to complete this event. I'm here to clear one of the main events of the Continent Where the Son of Light Was Sacrificed," I added.

"…"

"What did I tell you earlier?" I questioned.

"I…"

"Yes?"

"I… can't let you sacrifice yourself again," Kim Hyun-Sung continued.

'This guy is talking nonsense.'

However, I was sure this was a meaningful moment for him, as the Son of Light was created to become a sacrifice. I couldn't help but feel like I finally understood why this event was named "The Sacrificed Saint" instead of "War With the Outer Gods."

Lee Ji-Hye had really…

‘She had really made sure to pay attention even to the smallest details.’

Clearing the "War with the Outer Gods" and clearing "The Sacrificed Saint" gave off a different feeling, and I was sure that feeling affected Kim Hyun-Sung negatively.

To clear this event, the Son of Light had to be sacrificed, and he instinctively rejected that idea because of trauma.

To make things worse, there was no way he would be able to go through this again once he recalled how the "War with the Outer Gods" went. I could work as hard as I could to convince him that I would not be harmed, but…

‘It's still not going to be easy, but I expected this to happen.’

Kim Hyun-Sung looked kind of sad, and his eyes quivered as he stared at me again.

He seemed like there was something he wanted to tell me. Although he looked like he had organized all his thoughts, it still felt like he was reviewing what he wanted to say to me. I wasn't going to scold him for that.

I just needed to get what I wanted within the given time period, and if I were to comfort him a bit, we’d definitely come to an agreement.

I thought it was best if I led the conversation since this awkward silence wasn’t helping at all. Now that I thought about it, I felt like I was being too "formal," and I had only been saying the things that I wanted to say. This wasn’t going to help.

“How have you been doing?” I asked.

Kim Hyun-Sung seemed a bit relieved.

“*Ah*… well…”

“Actually, you don’t need to tell me since I’ve been watching you,” I interrupted.

“What? R-Really?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“Yes, I’ve been watching everything, and I felt everything as well. It was like watching

the situation through one of your eyes…" I answered.

"I see," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"I know you've been running around trying to find ways to bring me back…" I mentioned.

"I have," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"I also saw you trying to take the spear I gave to Miss Hye-Jin," I added.

"*Ah*… I wasn't trying to take it from her…" Kim Hyun-Sung commented.

"*Hahaha*," I laughed.

"…"

It was kind of difficult for me to move, but I started walking slowly.

He seemed to have realized that I wanted to walk with him a bit, as he started walking beside me. We couldn't hear any monsters or humans on this snowy mountain, so the crisp noise of our feet against the snow beneath us sounded clearer than ever.

"I know you've been struggling…" I said.

"I have," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"I saw how much you've been struggling. I saw you visiting guilds alone and bringing my body back to the guild by yourself. Also…" I trailed off.

"…"

"I noticed… you were about to do something extreme," I continued.

"…"

"…"

"W-Why did you stop me?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“Because the continent needs you, Mr. Hyun-Sung,” I replied.

Even though that’s what I told him, it wasn’t the answer.

“Also…” I stopped.

This was the answer.

“I didn’t want to see you die,” I told him.

“…”

“Just like what I told you before, I want… you to live your life,” I added.

“…”

“I wanted to see you forget everything and live life like at the time when you shone as bright as the light. I want to see you laugh and make memories with everyone, and I want you to live a happy life. I want you to do what you want to do, even though I may not be there anymore. That's my wish.

"Actually… I’m not allowed to wish happiness for the people,” I explained.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he was about to cry.

“I…” he paused.

“I know this is difficult for you,” I continued.

“I don’t deserve to live…”

I needed to corner him until he couldn't return.

“It’s not your fault, Mr. Hyun-Sung. It’s the demon’s fault for brainwashing you. Don’t think of the demon’s sin as your sin just because we had decided to doubt each other and cut ties with each other at the time. My death was inevitable,” I interrupted.

“You mean it was for the continent?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“Yes. It’s hard to explain the details, but I understood why after I was granted this

new role. Even if you hadn't killed me, I would have still died," I answered.

"How could that be…" Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

'It happened, and it happened to me.'

"That's ridiculous," he commented.

'There's nothing ridiculous about what I said.'

"I can't understand what you're trying to say, but I can say this with confidence—I-I'm the one who made you like that. I… basically killed you with my own hands. How could you not call that a sin? How could you forget?" Kim Hyun-Sung questioned.

"…"

"I still can't forget it. I really… can't forget. You don't know what I was thinking… what I was feeling when I slashed your neck and legs before stabbing you in the stomach…" Kim Hyun-Sung muttered.

"That was the demon's—"

"It has nothing to do with that! The thought I had at that time is the point here! I was smiling. I was… smiling so much… as I watched you crawl on the ground in pain, trying to survive… I was smiling!" I shouted.

'I get it.'

I was sure he felt good, as he had gotten his revenge on the guy who had turned his life into a living hell, but there was no need for me to mention that. Actually, I found it strange that he was feeling guilty about that.

"Those thoughts weren't your own thoughts," I said.

I had to pat his shoulder.

"Those thoughts weren't yours," I repeated.

"*Heu… heuk… heuuuk…"* Kim Hyun-Sung cried.

“That… wasn’t you, Mr. Hyun-Sung,” I said.

“I’m… sorry. *Heuk… heuuk…”* Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“You don’t need to apologize,” I told him.

“I’m… I’m… sorry… for hurting you…” Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

“You don’t have to apologize,” I repeated.

“I’m really sorry… for killing you. I-I’m… sorry about everything… For doubting you… not keeping my promise… not giving back as much as I received… and for leaving you alone,” Kim Hyun-Sung continued.

I displayed the smile of a saint as if I was telling him that I understood everything.

“I’m really… *Heuuuk… heuk…* I’m sorry,” Kim Hyun-Sung cried.

I performed the signature gesture of the light, which meant that I had forgiven his sins.

“I’m sure… this apology isn’t enough… but I’m… really, really… sorry,” Kim Hyun-Sung repeated.

It felt like my kindness as a saint could melt away the snow on this snowy mountain. I was sure that this scene… was beautiful. It was definitely so beautiful that I wouldn’t be embarrassed to show it to the world.

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Of course, it wouldn't resolve anything. I could talk as nicely as I could to Kim Hyun-Sung, but he would still struggle with the regret and the shame of what he had done. There was a saying that time could heal everything, but this one was an exception.

I was convinced he'd fight against that sin for the rest of his life. Even if I told him that a demon had brainwashed him when he did it and that it wasn't his intention to do that, he would still never forget what he had done.

However, my words would definitely comfort him, even just a bit.

I had forgiven him as a god and as Lee Ki-Young.

It was painful, but the light that symbolized tolerance and sacrifice always poured warm light over those who had confessed their sins.

I forced myself to smile warmly, and Kim Hyun-Sung finally looked up at me.

"Everything is fine," I said.

"…"

"All of it," I added.

"…"

"Now, let's walk for a bit," I suggested.

"Okay…" Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

'This is the important part.'

I came here for a reason, and I needed to achieve that goal. It didn't matter what I was going to do as long as fake Lee Ki-Young was killed by Kim Hyun-Sung. He

seemed like he had forgotten about that issue, but I didn't want to remind him of that at this point because he wouldn't kill the fake Lee Ki-Young just because I told him to do so.

'I just need to comfort him.'

Rather than pressuring him mentally just so I could fulfill my goal, comforting him and creating a touching atmosphere was the most reasonable method to go about it.

I wasn't sure how much time needed to pass for something to happen, but there would definitely be signs that it was about to happen. This event was basically a re-enactment of the continent's final moments, so Ji-Hye noona had definitely worked hard on this.

It wouldn't hurt to spend some time with him until then.

I didn't have a destination in mind, so I decided to walk slowly.

Kim Hyun-Sung was keeping up with my pace. Although he had many questions, he remained quiet. However, he seemed to have run out of patience because I heard him talking.

I expected him to ask that question.

"How are things… up there?"

"It's not that bad. It's still kind of awkward thinking that I'm up there. There are many things I want to tell you, but… it's against the laws of the continent… so just keep in mind that I'm always doing well," I replied.

"Are you being oppressed… or are you going through some kind of trouble—"

"No, it's nothing like that. I'm actually treated well up there. I mean, I'm qualified to be there after all, as I was the saint who had saved," I interrupted him.

"You were sacrificed," Kim Hyun-Sung argued.

'Don't be like that.'

"It was actually my choice, so I wasn't sacrificed. The beings up there aren't

omnipotent or perfect. They couldn't have prevented it," I clarified.

"Of course, they're going to say that to you, but it's different. They tricked us like the demons—"

"Mr. Hyun-Sung," I called out.

"I-I'm sorry," Kim Hyun-Sung stuttered.

"I won't ask you not to be mad at the gods like Benigoa, Lauren, and Elune because I know that's impossible. However, please just… find it in your heart to try to understand them even a little. They're pitiful beings as well. If they were evil, they wouldn't be up there in the first place. O-Of course, I'm mad at them as well," I explained.

"What do you mean?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"They've entrusted a burden too big for one person to carry…" I paused.

"So… you as well…" Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

"No, I'm not talking about me. I'm talking about you," I said.

"*Ah*…"

Kim Hyun-Sung looked touched, and he seemed to be wondering how a kind and innocent person like me could exist.

"Regardless of the reasoning behind it, they deserve to be criticized for the huge burden that they had entrusted to you. Moreover, they had dragged you into a battle you didn't want to fight in. They're the reason behind your pain. If I were them, I wouldn't make the same decision as them," I continued.

"…"

"*Haha*. I'm sorry for only talking about serious topics," I laughed.

"No, it's fine," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"If you want to take a break, we can…" I trailed off.

There wasn't a suitable place for us to rest because there was nothing on this snowy mountain, but Kim Hyun-Sung seemed to have noticed something. He started walking in a certain direction, and we soon found a tiny cave.

It was a pretty decent place for us to rest, but Kim Hyun-Sung didn't need rest, and I didn't need it either because my senses inside this body were dulled. However, walking was difficult, and I felt exhausted. Of course, I wasn't sure if I was physically as well, but I was definitely tired mentally, so I wanted to sit down at the very least.

We started a small campfire, and it felt like we made a decent camp. Of course, this would appear to be a poorly made camp to the current Blue Guild, but it was an excellent camp for rookies. It was crude, but it had everything we needed.

Most importantly, I could make a cup of coffee.

"This reminds me of the time you confessed that you were a regressor," I said.

"*Ah*, you're right," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"The small city of Heren. I heard that the city has become more advanced than before after the incident in the North," I said.

"That's right. The city has changed a lot. It has become a cultural and tourist city. The Sacred Democratic City and Lindel have invested a lot in that city… I'm sure you'll be surprised once you see it," Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

"Have you visited?" I asked.

"Yes, I visited the same shack…" Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

"It sounds like it's been a while since you were in the guild." I pointed out.

"I-I'm sorry," Kim Hyun-Sung stuttered.

"I didn't say it because I wanted an apology, but I do want you to focus on the guild a little more. No one is saying it, but I'm sure everyone is suffering, especially in times like this," I requested.

"*Ah…*"

'He just realized that despite the fact that he brought me here?'

"They're pretending to be strong and pretending like nothing is wrong, but they need your attention more than anyone. They probably feel like their guardian has disappeared. *Ah*, regarding the guild's finances…" I paused.

"I'm… sorry," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"I didn't look into the details, but the guild's business and finances don't seem to be in the best state right now," I said.

"I-I'm sorry," he repeated.

"If it hadn't been for Miss Kim Mi-Young, the guild would gone bankrupt long ago. It seems like you've completely neglected the Blue Guild to the point that you don't even know what's going on with it," I added.

"…"

"What I'm trying to say is that there's too much money being spent on useless things," I added.

"I'm…"

"Requesting information that had long become widespread from guilds that are charging sky-high commission is the dumbest move ever. You made a bad move by using the guild's money in auction houses and building a temple when the guild's finances were unstable," I complained.

The thought of it alone made me feel annoyed.

"While we're on the topic, do you really not have an idea about what people would think by building such a luxurious temple? You know the main temples of the Order of Benigoa or the Order of Elune aren't that fancy, right?" I grumbled.

"That's…"

A big and fancy temple won't necessarily become a place where I can rest. I actually feel uncomfortable in there," I added.

“I'm sorry,” Kim Hyun-Sung apologized.

‘Of course, I like big and fancy things, but that was just too much.’

“Do you have any idea about how much debt the guild has right now? And about that bag back then…”

'Damn it, let’s not bring that up. He won’t understand, anyway.'

“I’m really sorry,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“I love the continent, but you have to know that I have an equal amount of affection toward the Blue Guild as well. Honestly, I feel uncomfortable knowing that the guild is in such a bad state. Do you have any plan regarding the guild’s finances?” I asked.

“I have a lot of things in mind…” Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

“Let’s hear those ideas,” I suggested.

“That’s…”

“…”

“…”

“We can go on a dungeon exploration…”

“The Blue Guild isn’t a mid or small clan. The guild had grown too big for us to make a quick buck through clearing dungeons. I'm sure you know that as well, right?” I questioned.

“…”

“You have to keep in mind that the Blue Guild is powerful enough to influence Lindel, all of the Sacred Democratic Country, and even the entire continent. You also have to keep in mind that we have a ton of subcontracted guilds and clans. We also have a ton of guild members.

"My death must not affect their daily lives. Their struggles are daily, after all,” I reminded him.

“I’m really… really… sorry,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“More importantly…” I paused.

“Yes?”

“I want a place to return to someday,” I continued.

“…”

“I don’t know when that will be, but I want to return to the Blue Guild,” I told him.

“Can you come back?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

He took the bait.

“Yes. It’s hard to explain, but I can, and I’m trying,” I replied.

“*Ha… hahaha*…” Kim Hyun-Sung laughed in disbelief.

“If and only if the plan goes well,” I said.

Unfortunately, a part of Kim Hyun-Sung seemed to be suspecting that I could just be lying to him. He was questioning whether I—who always wanted to be sacrificed—was lying to him so that I could be sacrificed again.

We talked about many different things for a while, but there was still doubt in his eyes, which meant that he had realized how this event needed to end.

‘He’s quick-witted.’

“We should go riding or something upon my return. The continent is huge, but there are places I haven’t seen yet, so I would like to visit those places,” I suggested.

“Are you okay with that?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“You know the continent better than I do, so I’ll leave that to you,” I replied.

“Most of the places I had visited were battlefields, so they definitely don't have great sceneries, but I’ll try looking for places with beautiful sceneries,” Kim Hyun-Sung

said.

“There are many things I haven’t tried yet, but your top priority is to restore the Blue Guild's former glory,” I reminded Kim Hyun-Sung.

“…”

“Now that I think about it, I don’t think I’ve ever been overseas," I said.

“You’ll be surprised,” Kim Hyun-Sung commented.

We had silly conversations, but his gaze still remained unstable. It seemed like he was trying to distract me for as long as possible. He kept changing the subject and talked about new things, which was unlike him, and I knew why he was doing that.

‘The sign is coming.’

I looked up at the sky and saw deformed clouds.

Kim Hyun-Sung bit his lips and smiled indifferently as he talked to me. Obviously, we were talking about ridiculous conversations, like about how there was a new popular bag in town. He talked about a new line of bags that was discovered in a dungeon, and he exaggerated his story to get my attention.

Unfortunately, Kim Hyun-Sung had no idea that his attempts were futile.

In the end, Kim Hyun-Sung stared straight at me with his unsteady gaze.

I knew he wasn’t going to lie this time, so…

“I-I once had a dream.”

“…”

I looked away…

“I dreamed about a new beginning,” Kim Hyun-Sung continued.

'Look at him trying to see my reaction.'

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